SHINING PALACE

By CHRISTINE WHITING PARMENTER

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CHAPTER VII—Continued

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"Do you know, dear girl, such a proceeding never occurred to me. That may have been because I haven't regarded these things as property to be disposed of in an emergency. They seem a part of myself, Nora, because each one recalls some memory I wouldn't exchange for any amount of gold. But I confess to being rather dumb, all things considered. Your father has a nice taste himself. He would have been impressed."

Don's voice was rueful, and Nora promised: "We'll impress him yet! I'll make the most of these assets in my next letter."

For despite James Lambert's continued silence, Leonora's chatty chronicles of her own doings had been unfailing. They seemed to bridge the gap a little—to bring him nearer.

"And to know that he knows we're well and happy, is something, isn't it?" she asked Don wistfully one day in late September.

"It's a great deal—to a loyal soul like you," he answered, and turned away because the momentary sadness in her eyes had hurt him. "Come on, Nora," he called with cheer from the porch five minutes later. "Tide's out. What say we tramp a mile or two on the hard sand?"

It was an hour later when they discovered the stable beyond the dunes. Its ugly cupola, with tiny windows of red, amber and purple glass, caught Nora's eyes, and turning inland they explored what once had been a homesite.

"House must have burned," said Don, looking into a gaping cellar hole now overrun with fireweed. "A pity the barn didn't go too, Nora. It's a blot on the landscape."

"But the view from here is glorious. Come and see." Nora was standing before the stable door. "It's queer the owners didn't rebuild after living in such a heavenly place."

"And queerer," grinned Don, his eyes lifting to the cupola, "that those gay, enticing windows have escaped the stone-throwing prowess of some small boy. In a village the same temptation would have been fatal—to the windows, I mean!"

"I never could understand that destructive trait in the youthful male," said Leonora.

"That's only because the youthful female can't hit a target if she tries, my dear. Gosh! Nora, you're right about this view. I never saw a finer stretch of ocean. It's a big barn, isn't it? This doesn't look like farm land, either. Well, we must be getting on if we're to return via the post office and finish our supper before dark."

The postmaster produced one letter. Nora's heart quickened as he held it out, quickened until she saw the foreign stamp.

"Is it from Mr. Venable?"

Don nodded, tearing it open eagerly, for once unmindful of her disappointment.

He read it sauntering along the village street, his wife's hand on his arm preventing him from colliding with trees or light posts. He smiled as he read—chuckled—lost to everything save this message from his friend; and for the moment Nora felt strangely shut out—forgotten. Then Don turned, and she saw that his eyes were shining with some awakened interest.

"I just skimmed through the thing," he told her happily. "I'll read it aloud soon as we reach the shack. Ven writes a bully letter. He wants us to join them in Italy next month, Nora. Says there's no end of things I could do and write about — knows an English editor who's keen for that sort of stuff and will pay well for it—says that Constance wants to know"—Don grinned at the thrust—"if I'm still oblivious to the necessity of filthy lucre! What do you think of the plan, darling? How does a winter at Capri appeal to you? You're sure to fall for Ven and Connie and the youngsters. And they'll love you, Nora. They'll bow right down and worship or I miss my guess. We're foot-loose now. I can't perceive a single reason why we shouldn't do it. Let's go."

And Nora, who was beginning to suspect a good and sufficient reason for staying home, looked into her husband's eager face, lighted once more with the love of roaming that was so much a part of him, and answered gamely: "Let's!"

On a crisp October day some three weeks later they sailed for Naples. Despite a promise of winter in the air, Nora left the "shack" almost reluctantly; and remembering the dismay with which she had regarded the place a few months earlier, was forced to smile at her changed attitude. But it was home to her now. When, the girl asked herself, and with just cause, perhaps, would they have another?

Don, absorbed in eager preparations for the new adventure, felt no regrets—no visible regrets, at least. This hurt Nora a little, foolish though she knew the hurt to be. Perhaps, she mused, her husband would feel differently were he aware of the secret she was guarding. But it must remain a secret until they got away. On that Nora was resolved. Otherwise Don might sense her ridiculous dread of starting out for a foreign country at just this time—might even insist on changing all their plans; and that, she argued, wouldn't be fair to him. After all, hadn't she married this "soldier of fortune" with her eyes wide open? Hadn't she known he'd never be happy tied to a home? And there was no sane reason why they shouldn't go. If she had a mother to be near her here—a sister—but there was no one, not even a father as things stood now. Why should she care?

And like a beacon light, its cheerful rays piercing the fog, was the steadying thought of Constance Venable. Leonora was pondering on this one afternoon when she tramped alone up the deserted beach. The shack was in order, ready for their early departure in the morning. Don had accompanied Jim Perkins to the station with their luggage ("Such swell luggage, darling," he said gleefully, "thanks to your father for sending on those steamer trunks!"); and Nora, overcome with what she considered an unwarranted attack of homesickness, was making a gallant effort to walk it off.

Don lifted the rusty hasp.

Yes, she was thinking as she watched a gull dive gracefully down in search of sustenance, there would be Constance Venable. Don had told her so much about the older woman that she seemed a friend. Constance had had four children. Philip, the youngest, was born abroad. It was silly to worry, even for one minute. Connie would tell her what to do, of course.

Nora moved softly, not wishing to disturb a flock of sandpipers hurrying along in the wake of a receding wave; but at her cautious step they seemed to sense some danger, lifted their wings and "like the famous ladybug," thought the girl whimsically, "flew away home." Watching their swift, sure passage she found herself envying those birds a little. They recalled some words she must have heard in childhood. A verse out of the Bible, wasn't it? "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head."

How true that was of a vagabond like Don! And how long, wondered Don's wife, had those old, old words lain dormant in her brain, waiting to stir at sight of a flock of sandpipers flying to shelter?

Nora turned toward the dunes, wishing (although she couldn't have said why) to gaze on something less restless than the sea; conscious that nostalgia still had the upper hand. Somehow, it must be vanquished before Don returned. Their last honeymoon supper must be a happy one—happy for both of them.

"But I'm pretty tired and shouldn't have walked so far," she told herself as the stable they'd explored not long before came into view, its varicolored cupola windows sparkling like jewels in the sunlight. There was a seat in front of the old barn: a pew from some abandoned church. Why not rest there for a while—feast her eyes on that matchless vista of curving shore beyond the bay—get back her calmness, and then go home to Don?

What a beautiful place! Nora breathed deeply the sweet scent of balsam. How her father would love it! And with this thought she saw into her own heart, facing the knowledge that her reluctance in going so far away lay in the fact that she could not reach James Lambert should he need her. True, he had been curiously unforgiving for one who had forgiven so much in others. In their tragic parting he had been neither fair to Don nor generous to herself. Yet the girl knew that if anything happened (that fateful "anything" we cannot voice), her father would send for her. She knew that should she fail to come safely through the "valley of the shadow" which lay ahead, he would be at her side—with Don—when the lights went out.

And she was going away, far, far beyond the reach of those steady, comforting hands she loved so dearly. Nora's eyes misted. The lovely, distant shore became a blur. A lump rose in her throat. She could not swallow it; and said, aloud, a valorous effort to pull herself together: "Hold tight, Nora! Don't be a baby. Everything has its price, hasn't it? Did you really expect to avoid paying? Be your age, can't you? Remember you're not a butterfly any more. (It's just as well Dad kept those silver slippers!) Don't you dare cry or I'll be ashamed of you. I—"

She sprang up, startled, hearing nothing, yet cannily aware of an approaching presence. Then she saw Don emerging from between the highest dunes. He waved; came toward her rapidly. Not even that dragging sand, she noticed, could take the lightness from his tread.

"Gee! woman, you gave me the dickens of a scare!" He sank quite breathless onto the old pew, drawing her down beside him. "I actually wondered for a moment (a terrible moment, Nora!) if you'd been kidnaped. Then I discovered your footprints in the wet sand and the rest was easy. But don't you dare run off like this again and leave no message. I've got a—a palpitation! Feel my heart."

"You goose!" said Nora; and at something in her voice Don turned, scanning her closely.

"Why, what's the matter?"

"Nothing. I'm just a little tired."

"Nonsense! I think you're homesick."

"Only—only a bit. We've been so happy here."

He smiled at that.

"Is happiness a matter of location, silly?"

"Of course not, but . . ."

She hesitated, and Don said with mock severity: "Listen to me, Madam. Something has given you the blues—our last day, too! I sha'n't allow it. What does it matter where we are, if we're together? Why, we're going to have a wonderful winter, Nora! Italy. The narrow streets of Capri. Warmth and sunshine. Good friends like Ven and Connie when we want 'em; and always each other, sweetheart. Why are you sad?"

"No reason," admitted Nora, smiling at him. "No reason at all." Then in a defensive effort to change the subject: "Don, do you realize what we're sitting on?"

He turned, stood up, regarding a carved post with interest.

"It looks like—it is a pew out of some old church, Nora. Do you see this carving? It must have been done in the days when carpentry was an art, and a man worked for the love of his task, as we all should now. A pew! A real old-fashioned pew, isn't it? Say! can't you imagine the family that used to occupy it? First Mother, rustling up the aisle on Sunday morning in her best black silk, followed by three—no—" (his eyes were measuring the seat's capacity) "four kiddies, hushed and important, each one clasping his penny for the contribution box. And lastly, Father—very dignified, you know, and a bit uncomfortable in his Sunday suit—shoes squeaking a little; while some prim old maid (the village music teacher), plays soft music on a melodeon . . . See it, Nora?"

"See it!" Nora's troubles were lost in this picture of Don's imagination. "Why, it's every bit as plain as if I'd been there. Do you know, Don, I—I believe you could write a book!"

Don laughed at the thought, his eyes still on the ancient carving.

"Maybe I could—a book that nobody but you would read. Do you know," he added after a thoughtful moment, "it goes against everything in me, leaving a splendid piece of work like this to be battered by the tempests of a New England winter. Why, it'll be buried in snow for weeks and weeks, Nora! Doesn't seem right, does it—a pew out of an old church? If I knew who owned the thing I—I believe I'd buy it and cart it to the shack. What say we set it inside the barn, dear? This door's not locked. I tried it the other day."

Already he was lifting the rusted hasp—putting his shoulder to the heavy door. Then he turned, and Nora saw that her husband's thoughts were far away from that weather-beaten stable beside the sea.

"I can't help wondering about the man who carved these posts," he observed dreamily. "I can't help thinking how I'd feel myself if, after creating anything so good, it was left neglected in such a place. You see, the chap who did this carving put his heart into it. He must have, or the work wouldn't be so perfect. For all we know, it may have been his masterpiece. And he was carving to the glory of God, Nora—something he thought permanent—something he thought would be a part of that old church long, long after he was gone and perhaps forgotten." Don paused, flushing a little as he met her eyes. "Am—am I an idiot, Nora, to want to save it for him?"

She answered, rising: "You are a dreamer; but I love you for it, Don."

Don lifted the rusty hasp and putting his shoulder to the heavy door, found it unlocked.

"And you're a marvel to understand," he told her ardently. " 'Most any other girl would think me crazy. Lend a hand with that end, dear, and we'll have it safe inside in no time. Gee!" (as they laid their burden down) "what a peach of a barn! I'm going to climb into the cupola. I've a longing to look out of those colored windows."

"And risk breaking a leg so we can't start tomorrow?" retorted Nora. "Really, Don, I believe there's no one in the world just like you. One minute you're a thoughtful idealist; then—presto, change! A bit of colored glass transforms you into a little boy!"

Yes, that was Don! Nora was thinking of this when, hours later, she lay trying to sleep, yet unable to close her eyes as she watched a harvest moon brighten the room. That was Don—a dreamer who saw into the hearts of others. His imaginative sympathy might run away with him at times, as it had today, perhaps; but without that quality—without his unfailing capacity for seeing "the other fellow's side," would he be able to regard her father without bitterness?

Her father! Leonora had put the thought of him behind her during the last few hours. Their supper had been a gay affair. A bowl of late purple asters adorned the table; her biscuits were fluffy as could be desired, and even James Lambert would have praised the soup! Since they must rise at six o'clock they had turned in early; but it is one thing to go to bed, and quite another to drop at once into refreshing slumber.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Animal and Plant Species Estimated to Total About One and Half Million

The total number of species of plants and animals known to exist is conservatively estimated at 1½ million, according to a study of Organic Diversity issued by the Columbia University press. Many new species are described every year, and large additions may be expected in the future, it is pointed out.

While the true extent of organic diversity can only be surmised at present, there are 822,765 known species of animals. The number of described species of flowering plants is around 133,000, and of lower plants 100,000. These totals fall short of the actually existing number of species, and do not take into account the intraspecific variation which is commensurate only with the number of living individuals, it is explaiend.

"For centuries man has been interested in the diversity of living beings," says Theodosius Dobzhansky, professor of genetics in California Institute of Technology, author of the study. "The multitude of the distinct 'kinds' or species or organisms is seemingly endless, and within a species no uniformity prevails. In the case of man himself it is generally taken for granted that every individual is unique, different from every other one who now lives or has lived.

"The same is probably true for individuals of species other than man, although our methods of observation are frequently inadequate to show this. Attempts to understand the causes and significance of organic diversity have been made ever since antiquity; the problem seems to possess an irresistible esthetic appeal, and biology owes its existence in part to this appeal."

Mohammedan Rituals

A very special and intricate code of cleanliness must be performed before each of the five periods of daily prayer by the Mohammedans unless no opportunity for pollution between these prayer periods has occurred. Washing for prayer is a ceremony that must be observed according to the details of the law regarding it. Essentially it consists of washing face, nostrils, head, beard, neck, hands and arms up to elbows and feet up to the ankles. Only when he has accomplished each of these acts three times is he ready for his religious devotions. This is a total of 15 ritual cleansings every day for the devout Mohammedan.

Smart Fashions for Daytime in Spring

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Basque Dress for Girls.

No wonder girls love a basque dress like this! The fitted waist with its basque point in front gives them such a grown-up feeling. The full skirt, square neckline and puff sleeves are so becoming. Make this dress up for your daughter in taffeta or silk crepe in time for Easter, and later on in printed percale or dimity.

Large Women's Dress.

The diagram shows you how easy this dress is to make, and it fits to perfection. Notice the raglan shoulder line, the waistline snugged in by darts. The roll collar, with the smart little tab in front, is very soft and becoming. Very comfortable to work round the house in, this dress is sufficiently tailored so that you can go shopping in it, too. Make it up in percale, gingham, broadcloth or tub silk.

The Patterns.

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Send your order to The Sewing Circle Pattern Dept., 247 W. Forty-third street, New York, N. Y. Price of patterns, 15 cents (in coins) each.

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TIPS to Gardeners

Combinations

TO INCREASE yield from the vegetable plot, the home gardener should grow "combined cultures."

The theory is to plant in closely spaced adjacent rows vegetables harvested at widely different times, using one before the other begins to mature.

Combine cauliflower, lettuce and radish, for instance. Plant cauliflower early in rows three feet apart. Between the rows plant lettuce, and between lettuce and cauliflower rows plant radish. Radishes are harvested early, then the lettuce, and later the cauliflower.

Following are several other combinations recommended by Harold Coulter, Ferry Seed Institute vegetable expert:

Carrots and parsnips in alternate rows two feet apart; radishes between first two rows; lettuce between second and third rows, and spinach between third and fourth rows.

Spinach rows two and one-half feet apart; radishes between spinach; pepper plants set between spinach when radishes are pulled.

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