SHINING PALACE

By CHRISTINE WHITING PARMENTER

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CHAPTER IX—Continued

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So Nora came back, though it was all of two days before she spoke. Her first real sentence was: "Have you cabled to Father?" Her second: "What have they done to you, Don? You look five years older!" Her third: "I think his hair will wave like yours, darling."

Not until then did Don feel that she had come back to stay.

The tide was coming in. Said Nora, watching the restless breakers: "That was a beauty, wasn't it? Let's move back close to the dunes, Don. We'll be getting wet."

Her husband, flat on the sun-warmed sands of Maine, commanded lazily: "Sit still, woman. Who minds a dash of salt water on such a day?"

"I do," confessed Nora, "at least, when it gets into my shoes! Jimsy precious, don't throw that sand into Daddy's hair. Haven't I told you not to hundreds of times?"

"Hund'eds o' times," Jimsy, aged two years and some odd months admitted amiably; and sat down on his father without warning.

"Ouch!" exclaimed Don. "What do you think my stomach's made of, feller? He's a buster, isn't he, Nora? I bet he's headed for the prize ring! Was my heir and namesake as husky at this age? I can't remember."

With cautious eyes on an approaching wave, Nora responded: "He was almost four pounds lighter; and then that awful typhoid in South Africa pulled him down. Sometimes I feel that he's never quite recovered from the effects of it. I believe . . ."

She paused, because neither of them liked to recall that year near Cape Town, especially Nora. Though she had seen

". . . the dawn in Africa—
That gorgeous dawn of Africa
Which springs from out the veld"

it had left her cold. For it was Africa, she thought, forgetting the approaching breakers as she looked down on Don, that had etched those wrinkles around his eyes—sprinkled his brown hair with gray, and, for a time, tightened the corners of his engaging mouth into something grim. It had been months before Nora saw those lines relax, before she knew that, somehow, her husband's spirit had risen again to the heights where she so yearned to keep it.

Cape Town! Always Nora was glad to remember that it was not Don's love of roving which took them there. He could never reproach himself for that. After the birth of her first baby they had remained in England for six months; then returned to Italy, partly because it cost less to live there, but principally because the London editor had agreed to use more of Don's "letters." They both longed for Capri. Even without the Venables, who were to winter in New York that year, it would seem homelike. But it was understood that Don's articles must describe some different portion of the country, so a tiny villa overlooking Lake Como was their headquarters during the next year.

Not that the entire year was spent in Italy. Trust Don for that! There had been a wonderful two months in southern France—another in Belgium—a German Christmas! And there was always the joy of watching their small son change and develop: that ageless miracle which to adoring parents is ever new.

Time drifted by, a happy time, though there were days when the realization that her father was still unrelenting, would descend bleakly on Leonora, blinding her eyes to the Italian sunshine—bringing her tears at night when none could see. For not even after learning that she was a mother had James Lambert written. This hurt the girl more than all that had gone before; and, knowing she suffered, her husband was conscious of futile rage toward the man who wounded her. She said one day when the little boy was taking his first steps:

"Don, when you wrote to Father about the baby, did—did you tell him how very sick I was?"

Don nodded; arose, and because he feared to say something unkind of Nora's father, merely stooped down to kiss the top of her bright head.

"Perhaps he never got the letter, Don."

"Perhaps," Don echoed. And then, suddenly furious at the situation: "Nora, my dear, don't grieve yourself sick over him a minute longer. You've gone so much more than half way, haven't you? Of course your father knows how ill you were. You've written yourself, time and again since the boy came."

"Yes," Nora assented, "but I've always made light of that part, dear."

"You would!" Don was still angry. "Put him out of your mind, Nora. Your father's a—a stubborn old—"

He paused, not wishing to say just what he thought—sorry he'd said as much; but Nora, to his surprise, looked up and smiled at him.

"You're right," she said. "He's a stubborn old angel; but he's the only father I've ever known, Don, and I can't forget him even though he has—has forgotten me."

"Oh, no he hasn't!" Don spoke with truth that was intuitive. "He'll never forget you, Nora. You can bank on that if it's any comfort."

So, "banking on that," Nora's letters to James Lambert continued to be a part of her busy life. Sometimes they followed one another closely. Sometimes long weeks lay in between; but they did not cease.

And then, when Donald Mason, Jr., was two years old and his parents were making plans for a return to America, the London editor whom Don had christened "old life-preserver," made him an offer. He wanted more "Letters." His public had asked for them—letters from

For a long time Nora sat stricken.

some farther-away point than Italy. Would Mr. Mason consider going to South Africa? In the region near Cape Town there was a wealth of material for the sort of thing he did so entertainingly. A prompt decision would be very greatly appreciated . . .

The prompt decision took Don less than thirty seconds. He said, tossing the letter to Leonora: "Just look at that, Madam! We'll go, of course. It's bread and butter, with a whale of an opportunity for a lark thrown in." His eyes were already ashine with the light of adventure; then, as Nora said nothing, he glanced up quickly and caught a glimpse of her dismay.

"You—you don't want to go?" he asked, incredulous.

She turned away. Don mustn't see her tell-tale eyes.

"Of course I do! It's only that I'd counted on going home. I thought if we were nearer that Father might consent to see us—see the baby, I mean. But it's all right, Don. Of course we shall go. And it's only a year."

But what a year!

They were staying temporarily in a settlement some miles north of Cape Town, gathering material for Don's work. Three months had passed. Only five of the promised Letters off to England; and on the very morning when Nora discovered that she was to face the ordeal of motherhood again, Don returned from a four-days' trip to the diamond mines of Kimberley, kissed her half-heartedly, dropped into the nearest chair, and said: "I'm all in, Nora. I—I am awfully afraid that something's—got me."

Something had! Six days later when the doctor diagnosed the case as typhoid, Don was too sick to be moved to a Cape Town hospital. More than half ill herself, Nora nursed her husband through weary days and nights—week after week of weary days and nights, not daring to spend money for a trained helper.

Not that there weren't those who lent assistance when it became known that "the nice American—the writer chap" was down with typhoid. Nora never forgot one terrible gray dawn when, worn with her vigil—fighting the deadly nausea that was then her portion—Don slightly delirious—the baby fretting unaccountably, she glanced up at the sound of a softly opening door to see a woman whose unenviable reputation was common knowledge in the community. Nora had once smiled courteously on her in passing, "because," she said in answer to the amazement that swept across the face of her own escort, an English boy of twenty who, in Don's absence, was showing her "a bit of Africa,"—"because we don't know, do we, what dragged her down?"

And after a moment's silence the boy burst out impulsively: his face flushing: "I say! I—I think that's ripping of you, Mrs. Mason!"

So in the chill, gray dawn, Nora, lifting heavy eyelids, beheld that woman in the doorway. Her mouth was rouged into a cupid's bow; her hair hung in untidy wisps about her face; and, even in that surprising moment Nora saw, embedded in the flesh of one pudgy finger, a diamond that would have supported Don's small family for a year or more.

"You been up all night?" was her only greeting. "I saw your light burnin' at two o'clock. Say, lady, you ain't built for a job like this; and there ain't a thing you could tell me about typhoid. I near died of it myself, and I've nursed three cases. I'll look after your man now while you get a rest. Maybe if you lay down side o' that kid he'll quit his yellin'. You go lay down."

Without one protest Nora dropped like a log beside the baby. They slept for hours. It was long past noon when she awoke. The woman had vanished, and sitting beside Don's bed was the young English boy. He said, as if it were the most natural thing on earth to have found such a woman guarding the sick man:

"She said to tell you that Mr. Mason had a nap; and she'll be back at midnight to spell you for a while. The kiddie woke up once and she gave him some boiled milk. The doctor's been, and thinks your husband has turned the corner."

Nora felt sure during the next few days, that the worst was over; but before her husband was on his feet again, the baby sickened as his father had. Don, a gaunt, hollow-eyed skeleton (it frightened Nora just to look at him), rose from his bed to help her with the nursing. In those black days, watching their little son waste to a shadow, fighting together for his very life, nothing else mattered, not even an irate cable from the London editor demanding copy long overdue.

It was on a day when things had been very bad indeed, that the young Englishman came in bearing a letter addressed to Leonora in the familiar writing of Constance Venable. After long, fretful hours the baby was asleep, and Don said softly: "Read it aloud, dear. Perhaps it will cheer us up a little."

Nora opened the letter, glanced down the page slowly, and then said: "Let's wait, Don." Her voice sounded, he noticed, very strange. And she was breathing hard.

"What's happened?" he questioned, and would have grasped the missive had she not held it back.

"It—it's Ven, darling," she told him, her voice trembling now.

"Ven?"

"Gone, Don. Drowned on their own beach off the island—a cramp probably. He—he was all alone."

She arose then, to put her arms about him. During those months at Capri Don's friendship for Carl Venable had grown into something very close. For a long time, it seemed to Nora, Don sat there, his face pressed into her shoulder. Then he said harshly: "Read the letter, Nora. It can't be any worse than—this."

They read it with tears; yet both felt better after the reading. It was a long letter, and toward the end Constance had written: "Try not to grieve too much, for that would grieve Carl, wouldn't it? He was the happiest human being I have ever known. After all, it's a wonderful thing to go out on the crest of life, leaving only one's finest work as a memorial. He had dreaded the time when his hand might falter—when that sure, clean stroke of the brush which marks his paintings, would become unsteady. And we had 20 beautiful years together, Nora; years when we lived lavishly—spent too lavishly some would think. But I don't regret it, even though there is little left save some paintings, his life insurance, and the villa at Capri. If that seems strange, recalling the prices Carl's work has brought, remember the countless friends he was always helping: discouraged artists—boys needing an education—old folks who save for him would have ended their days in loneliness and poverty. Money meant nothing to Carl except a means of doing things for others. And his last gift, Nora, was a gift for you! It's safe at the shack now—was to have been a surprise when you came home, 'because,' he said, 'it'll be years before they'll save enough to buy one, and it's a crime for Nora not to have it while she's young!'—A beautiful baby-grand piano, dear Nora. One of the finest. He was so happy about it—one of his last real happinesses . . ."

Nora paused. She could not read any further; nor could Don speak. And then a voice came from the bed, a tired, weak little voice that many times during those days they had feared never to hear again:

"Me wants — dinkawater — Mudder."

CHAPTER X

The rest seemed easy to Leonora compared with all that had gone before. Yet the night when she found Don asleep over the weekly "Letters from Cape Town," his head dropped forward on the kitchen table that served as desk, one still-thin hand clutching a stub of pencil ("Too tired to use his typewriter, poor boy!" she thought compassionately), and discovered that instead of spending long days in the open as he'd led her to believe, getting back strength lost in his illness, he had for weeks been going into Cape Town to help load freighters at the docks because it meant more money — immediate money, the girl wished for one bitter moment that they had never met.

"Oh, Don, what have I brought you to?" she cried; and he responded in an effort to console her:

"To something better, I hope, than the careless boy you married, Nora. We've been growing up, I suppose; and growing pains leave scars on some of us. Give me time, darling, and I'll get back my old stride."

It still hurt Nora to think about that night.

And the next morning!

In Don's absence a letter arrived from the London editor. Nora opened it eagerly. According to her husband's contract each article was to be paid for when received; and the "cupboard was bare," or nearer bare than she liked to think about. But to her surprise no crisp, blue check fell from the envelope. It contained merely a letter and a manuscript. The editor was, it appeared, courteously puzzled. His contributor's work seemed to be slipping—was surely not up to its customary standard. The last few installments had seemed forced—as if he were writing under pressure, not for the joy of narrating his adventures. They lacked utterly the charm of all his former work. For both their sakes he was returning the last "Letter from Cape Town."

For a long time Nora sat stricken, staring at those words written in neat longhand. Under the circumstances it was not a disagreeable letter. It was merely cold. It made her think of a hypercritical parent reproving a careless child. It would hit Don like a blow between the eyes.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Tonga Archipelago Consists of About One Hundred Large and Small Islands

The Tonga archipelago, or Friendly islands, are under British protectorate, but the government is a constitutional monarchy, and the dynasty of its royal family remains unbroken. The picturesque, dreamy town of Nukualofa is the capital. This group of islands must not be confused with Raratonga in the Cook group, which is a dependency of New Zealand. The Tonga archipelago consists of about 100 islands, large and small.

It was the daring navigator and explorer, Cook, who gave the name of Friendly islands to the coral group where he found the Tongans living in apparent peace and happiness. According to tradition, states a writer in the Boston Globe, this name was inappropriate, as it was afterward discovered that a plot was on foot for the massacre of Cook and his men and that it was only prevented from being carried out through the unexpected development of differences among those who were to perform the deed.

The Tongans were in a considerable state of civilization at the time of Captain Cook's discovery of the islands. With the exception of wars with the neighboring Fijians, they have always been peaceable people. They bear a closer resemblance to the Samoans than to any other branch of the Polynesian race.

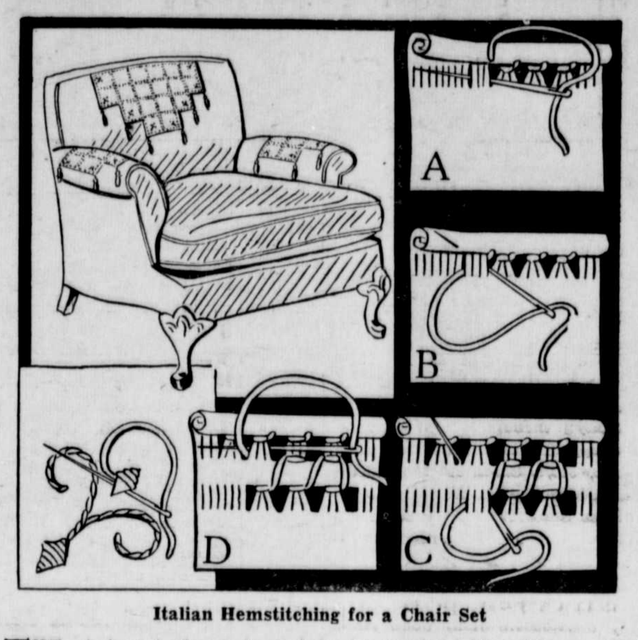
In the tropical water are many species of beautifully colored and strangely shaped fish. Great dove-colored sea turtles, some of them weighing as much as 700 pounds; fish of the deepest blue, brightest red, yellow, pink, green, black and striped and mottled and of every conceivable shape float sluggishly around.

Wine Worth $20,000 a Drop!

The Rathskeller's celebrated "Rose Cellar" in Bremen has a wine that even millionaires could not afford to drink, a Rudesheimer from the year 1653. Originally the wine cost 300 gold talers. Adding to this the yearly charge for interest and leakage, statisticians reckon that the value of the wine is over $20,000 a drop or more than $20,000,000 a glass. Except as a curiosity, however, it is in practice not worth a cent, since the improvement of wine with age has its limits and after "maturing" for three hundred years, this Rudesheimer has completely lost its flavor.

HOW to SEW

By RUTH WYETH SPEARS



Italian Hemstitching for a Chair Set

THE chair set shown here is made of an even meshed cream linen, marked off in squares of Italian hemstitching. Tiny scrolls in outline stitch with two diamonds in satin stitch are embroidered in all the outside corners. The scroll motif is shown at lower left. The tassels are made by raveling strips of the material and then rolling them.

The chair back piece measures 15 by 10 inches finished, and the chair arm pieces 7½ by 7½ inches. Allow ⅜-inch at all edges for the rolled hems. The hemstitched squares measure 2½ inches. Mark them in pencil. The method of hemstitching the rolled edges is shown here at A and B. Remember that a moist thumb always helps in rolling an edge evenly. Italian hemstitching is really just two rows worked together as shown at C and D. To prepare the rows, draw two threads, skip four and then draw two more.

Readers who have received their copy of Mrs. Spears' book on Sewing, for the Home Decorator, will be pleased to know that Book No. 2 is now ready. Ninety embroidery stitches; fabric repairing; also table settings; gifts; and many things to make for yourself and the children. If you like hand work you will be pleased with this unique book of complete directions for every article illustrated. Postpaid upon receipt of 25 cents (coin preferred). Just ask for Book No. 2 and address Mrs. Spears, 210 South Desplaines St., Chicago, Ill.

Recovery in Prospect, But Not Immediate

Nearly all his life, when he was ill, Mark Twain was inundated with letters from well-wishers, one offering this, and another offering that marvelous remedy for his malady, whatever it might be, says his daughter, Clara Clemens (in "My Father: Mark Twain").

He tried to acknowledge all such messages and sometimes did so in a whimsical way. Here is one of his replies:

"Dear Sir (or Madam): I try every remedy that is sent to me. I am now on No. 67. Yours is No. 2,653. I am looking forward to its beneficial results."

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