SHINING PALACE

By CHRISTINE WHITING PARMENTER

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CHAPTER XIII—Continued

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Ned nodded, admitting: "They were darned good. I remember sitting up late to finish one. But I've never seen any of them since, Dad. Have you?"

"Not one." The old man's eyes grew vaguely troubled. "I watched for them too. Nora wrote as if there were no uncertainty about their publication—it was an assignment, I believe. She seemed happy; but her letter must have been two weeks old before I saw it. I was down with pneumonia just then, and all my personal mail was laid aside until I could attend to it myself. She wrote from a boarding house, I think, not a hotel. They were leaving in a day or two, as soon as Don attended to some business and the city got dug out of a blizzard."

Ned raised his head, quickly, as if reminded of something.

"You say this was within three years? Are you absolutely sure, Dad?"

"Sure? Am I likely to forget that wretched sickness? It was three years next month when the letter came, Ned; and since then nothing but silence. Such a thing never happened before. I didn't answer Nora's letters, but she's always written. Sometimes regularly, sometimes with several months between. I tried to persuade myself that their plans changed suddenly, especially when Don's articles failed to appear. I thought they might have gone to some out-of-the-way country and stayed there. I suppose I was just trying to 'kid myself,' as the boys say. I even tried to believe that since they were apparently successful she had forgotten me—given me up as a bad jeb—but that's not—Nora. I've been very unhappy about her, Ned. Very troubled. And tonight something that Martha said has made me more so."

James glanced up, conscious that his son was inattentive. Ned said, thoughtfully: "Do you remember a terrible catastrophe in Chicago, when the roof of a theater collapsed under a weight of snow?"

His father was suddenly erect.

"You don't mean—"

"I don't mean that anything happened to Nora," broke in Ned. "The thing occurred, as I remember now, when you were too sick to see the papers. I only glanced at the headlines myself. I loathe such details. But Corinne revels in 'em, you know. She even read part of the story aloud at the table—how a fellow who was in the audience and got out safely, went back into the doomed place and spent hours under a collapsing balcony trying to rescue a child who was pinned beneath the wreckage. It was very luridly told. The reporter claimed to have been an eye witness. Said the man refused to quit even when warned. He saved the child, I believe, but failed to get out himself. And his name was Mason. He was caught under the timbers."

"Killed?"

"No; but I judged from what the paper said that he'd better have been. If it were Don—"

James turned on his son angrily.

"Why wasn't I told of this?" Then, his voice softening: "But Mason's a common enough name, Ned. Why should you think it was Nora's husband?"

"Only because the paper said Dan Mason—not Don, you understand, but so near that a misprint might have been possible. I didn't speak of it because you were so sick just then. I couldn't worry you, Dad; though I see now that I should have investigated the matter myself. My only excuse is that it was the very time when Junior got into that scrape at college, and Corinne was—well, she felt it was all my fault. She thought I was too strict—didn't understand the boy at all—said he forged that check because I didn't give him enough allowance and—Oh, I was snowed under! I went through things I never told you, and never will. My home very nearly went on the rocks, Dad; though that's over now, thank God! But it put everything else out of my mind at the time—the awful worry of it. And later, when I remembered, I supposed of course that if Nora were in real want she would have appealed to you."

"Oh, no she wouldn't!" The bitterness in James Lambert's voice was toward himself. "I lost my temper one day and warned her not to. And Nora's got pluck. Always did have. And character. Did I ever tell you . . ."

It was then that Ned heard the story of courageous little Nora, sitting for hours beside the body of her mother, waiting for the father she had never seen to take her "home." He was plainly touched.

"Yes, she's got character," he admitted. "She showed it when she gave up a fortune (or thought she did) because she loved that fellow and knew he needed her. There've been times these last few years, Dad, when I've felt responsible for the whole racket. If Don Mason hadn't knocked me down that day in the office, the break between you and Leonora might never have come about."

James, staring into the fire, said nothing because there was no denying this aspect of the case; and after a silence Ned went on:

"You see, I thought that story he told me was just bunk. I supposed he was trying to pull the wool over my eyes; and I as much as told him he lied. I couldn't imagine (can't now, for that matter) how any sane man could be so easy as to hand over a roll of bills to a girl he'd never seen before, without making some sort of investigation. But I suppose it takes all kinds of people to make a world; and my—my own kids, now they're old enough to think about it, tell me I haven't any imagination. And if

"You see, I thought that story he told me was just bunk."

Don wasn't lying (and I doubt now that he was), you can hardly blame him for seeing red, can you?"

"He didn't lie," said James, "but the fellow had no business to lose his temper to—to that extent," he added hastily, remembering occasions when his own temper had exploded too violently for the comfort of those concerned.

Surmising his father's thought, Ned smiled a little; and then went on: "Well, that's ancient history now; and since then other things have hurt me so much more that that old experience doesn't seem worth remembering—certainly not worth bearing grudges for. What troubles me is that I've gone on all these years without trying to bring you and Nora together. And I might have. You can't deny that, Dad. I've known you were missing her; but I've never lifted a finger to bring her back. Years ago Martha told me how dead the whole house seemed without her. She hinted that I ought to talk with you about it; but somehow I couldn't. It was the night I made the mistake of trying to buy Nora's four-poster! Do you remember?"

James looked up, a pathetic smile in his worried eyes.

"Did I hurt your feelings, son?"

"Not so they stayed hurt. You never have, Dad. It's because you and I have always been so close and understood each other, that the gap between my boy and me has seemed so tragic. Even the girls (whom I sometimes feared I was spoiling) tell me I never see their side—that I'm unsympathetic. I suppose I am, in a way. I was unsympathetic to Nora, always; though it took a number of hard knocks to open my eyes to the fact."

James murmured, as if his mind had wandered a little from what Ned was saying: "If—if I could only know where she is now!"

"I know where she was six weeks ago," was the amazing rejoinder.

"You do!" James Lambert's voice sounded belligerent.

"I heard not half an hour before I started over," Ned told him. "Corinne was at a tea this afternoon and gave one of the other women a lift home—Mrs. Ed Whitney, whose niece was in school with Nora, you'll remember. She and some friends were on a motor trip through Maine a while ago. They stopped somewhere for lunch and couldn't get away for several hours—some trouble with their car—and to pass the time they wandered into the hotel ball room to watch a dancing class—children of the summer population, I suppose. And Nora was at the piano!"

"She was!"

Ned nodded.

"Mrs. Whitney didn't recognize her at first. Said she looked a good deal older, and—and pretty rocky. She was going to speak, but on second thoughts decided it would be kinder not to. But she made some inquiries of the hotel people who were natives of the place. They said that Nora was trying to support her family. That she played the organ at church, and gave music lessons, and made cakes to sell during the summer season; and—" Ned hesitated, as if uncertain whether to finish, "and—well they said, Father, that she was living in an old barn or garage or something, down near the water."

James stared at him.

"My Nora living in a barn?"

"That's what Mrs. Whitney said; but she's one who makes the most of a good story, Dad, so don't let that worry you. What riled me was that she told Corinne she thought we ought to do something about it. She implied, as politely as possible, that we'd treated Nora outrageously. Corinne was so mad she didn't have sense enough to ask the name of the town; but I'll call Mrs. Whitney on the telephone and find out. Even Corinne thinks that something should be done—that is" (a cynical smile curved Ned's lips) "she's afraid there'll be talk unless we do it!"

For a moment or two James Lambert did not respond. Then he arose and unlocked a beautiful cabinet of Chinese lacquer. As the doors swung open Ned saw that it contained letters—neat piles of letters held together with elastic bands, and a somewhat surprising pair of silver slippers, tarnished now, from being laid away. "Nora's!" he thought; and then his father turned, extending the postal written so long ago.

"I got this in the early summer, three years back. I guess she was poking a little fun at me. I'd told her, you see, that to survive a house must be founded on a rock. She says:

" 'Safe upon the solid rock the ugly
houses stand;
Come and see my shining palace
built upon the sand!'

"Except for a hint the first time they went to Capri, it's the nearest thing to an invitation she ever gave me. I wish—" The old man paused, then finished thoughtfully, in all reverence: "I wish—to God—I'd gone."

Ned was studying the postal—its quotation — instructions, and the small red map.

"A shining palace," he observed. "That's not the idea Mrs. Whitney gathered—not at all. Corinne said that she appeared quite horrified. Well, Dad, these directions are plain enough. I'll go to Maine tomorrow."

But James, who had resumed his seat before the fire, shook his head.

"No, son, I'm going myself. I dare say I'm the stubborn old man that Martha showed me this evening; but I'm not too stubborn to ask forgiveness of the only daughter I ever had, nor too old to take a journey of a few hours. If they turn me out—and I can't imagine Nora turning her father out, Ned—I can come away again; but I want to see the situation with my own eyes."

He arose, moving briskly, alertly (as if, Ned told himself, there were something to move for!), rummaged in his desk for a few minutes, and then said: "I thought there was a timetable around here, but evidently Martha's been cleaning house. Will you call up for me, Ned, and engage a Pullman chair on the first train? I want to get off early. And before you leave ask John to have the car here at the proper time."

"That won't be necessary, Dad. I'll run you down to the station myself. I'd like to."

"That'll be fine!" ("How bright his eyes are!" Ned was thinking.) "I'm going to turn in now, if you don't mind. Good-night, son."

"Good-night, Father."

As Ned stood for a moment watching the old man go upstairs, he realized that the vibrancy, long absent from his father's voice, was back again. His face too, looked different than it had an hour ago, extraordinarily different. Its apathy had given way to hope. Its harassed lines seemed to be resting. It was, for the first time in years, a peaceful face.

"He looks," thought Ned in a moment of rare intuition, "he looks like a man who has fought a good fight and come out victorious."

It was well past the middle of the next afternoon when James Lambert found himself trudging along a highway in the state of Maine, with Nora's postcard in his pocket, and something akin to misgiving in his heart. For how would she receive her father after his long silence—his long neglect? James wondered, and wondering, his subtle fear increased.

As her card had hinted might be the case, he found the Port's one taxi out of commission, and following those three-year-old instructions, had taken a joggling, one-man trolley to the end of the route. After a couple of giggling schoolgirls left the car he was its only passenger; and despite the familiar warning: "Don't talk to the motorman," James went forward and spoke through the little window.

"Do you know a Mrs. Donald Mason who lives somewhere around here?"

The man's face brightened.

"Sure I do! Hold my car five minutes for her every Sat'day night when she goes down to rehearse the choir, and ten every Sunday mornin' when she goes to church. As I says to her: 'The Shore Line Electric Railway company won't never be any wiser, Mis' Mason, and it don't need the extry time so much as you do.' That's what I said; and if the pres'dent of the company was to call me down for runnin' off schedule, I'd keep right on doin' it because the year my wife died Mis' Mason made a birthday cake for my little girl. It had fancy pink frostin' on it same as the high priced ones she makes for the summer folks, and five pink candles all ready to light up. I donno how she knew when the kid's birthday was, but that's what she done and I'd hold my car a good half hour if she was to ask me."

"So would I," said James. "And you mean she plays the organ at some church?"

"The Methodist-'Piscopal at the Port. Gosh! that woman can play to beat the band. Folks that never set foot inside a church before, are reg'lar attendants since she took over the music. Yes sir, she plays like a breeze! She gives piano lessons too; and makes bakery stuff to sell durin' the season. She's a smart woman, Mis' Mason. You can tell to hear her talk that she's got a real good education; but she's common as own folks for all that—don't high-hat no one. Here's the end o' the line now. You just keep goin' till you see their mail box. Name's right on it. It ain't only a short half mile and you can't miss it. Yes, ocean side, only the house don't show from the road. It's way in, close to the dunes—made out of an old barn they bought cheap. Terrible cold place to live come winter, seems though."

The conductor, his garrulous conversation and his trolley car, jogged out of sight, and feeling somewhat lonesome, James started forward.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Licking Stamps, Envelopes, Fingers Dangerous Practice; Germs in the Gum

There are many ways in which the tongue is misused—for example, in licking stamps and envelope flaps, moistening the thumb or forefinger before dealing cards, sorting papers, turning the leaves of books. Licking the thumb or finger is a bad practice, and should be abandoned for two good reasons—out of respect for the tongue and out of consideration for the next person, says London Tit-Bits Magazine.

Just think it out. Stamps when bought are pushed across a counter of very doubtful cleanliness; they are carried in a waistcoat pocket, in a purse or handbag, with all the usual conglomeration, be it clean or dirty. Stamps are lined with gum—gum which picks up dust and the germs which may be part and parcel of the dust—and the tongue that licks the stamps collects this miscellany.

Envelope flaps may be less dirty than stamps, but they are likely to be dusty. A student recently collected samples of dust from ordinarily clean surroundings—from table, window-ledge, coats and so on. The samples were sown on suitable growing media, incubated, and examined under a microscope; several varieties of dangerous disease germs were found, despite the fact that none of the objects examined would have been considered dirty. It is more than likely that envelopes might collect similar samples of dust.

The habit of moistening the thumb again and again when touching cards or papers may cause germs to be transferred from one person's mouth to that of another.

Even the cleanest mouth is far from germless; the average mouth and throat form a kind of hot-bed for microbes, to the activity of which the owner may be immune from long contact and an acquired tolerance. But when such germs are transferred to another person they are likely to attack with all possible virulence.

Newton, Great Mathematician

One of the world's greatest mathematicians left school at an early age (fifteen) to work on a farm, but didn't stay there. This was Sir Isaac Newton. Finding he was useless as a farmer, his parents sent him to college, where he developed some of his most famous theories.

FAMOUS STORIES

King Arthur's Death Told in Tennyson Tale

By ELIZABETH C. JAMES

IN THE last days of King Arthur, his men were led in revolt against him by the traitorous knight, Sir Modred. Warfare had continued many months and the time had now come for the last struggle. Among those faithful to the king was the knight, Sir Bedivere, now constant companion to the lonely and aged king.

Overlooking the camps which were arrayed for battle, the king thought sorrowfully of his knights whom he was now fighting. His heart was heavy as the battle began, relates Lord Tennyson in his story, "The Death of King Arthur."

On every side there was strife to the death until the field was strewn with men. At the point of Excalibur, King Arthur's famous sword, Sir Modred met his end. But, alas, King Arthur was sorely wounded. Carefully Sir Bedivere carried his king off the field. But King Arthur knew that now he was to die.

Elizabeth James

Calling his loyal knights to him, he requested Sir Bedivere to carry Excalibur down to the lake front and throw it into the water. The knight thought this a strange request, but he lifted the treasured sword and went his way to the lake.

Standing beside the water, Sir Bedivere thought of the needless waste of so many jewels and of so much beauty and he hid Excalibur in a tree. When Sir Bedivere stood again before him, King Arthur asked what he had seen when the threw the sword into the water. Sir Bedivere answered, "The rippling of the waves."

"Betrayer!" cried the king. "Do as I bid you!"

Standing again beside the water the knight thought: the king is ill and does not know what he says, so I will hide the sword. Accordingly, he once more placed it safely away. The second time the king asked what he had seen and the knight gave the same answer as before, "The rippling of the waves."

With great effort King Arthur cried, "If you do not do as I command, I will kill you with my own hands!"

Sir Bedivere ran to the lake, wheeled the sword high, and with all his might, hurled it into the lake. Instantly an arm clothed in rich apparel rose from the lake, caught the sword, brandished it three times and drew Excalibur under the waves. When the king had heard what Sir Bedivere had seen, his soul was satisfied. Then he made his last request of his knight, that Sir Bedivere would assist him to reach the shores of the lake.

Old Order Changeth.

When the king stood beside the waters, there appeared in the distance a barge. Nearer and nearer it came, until the richness of the black draperies could be seen. Three queens weeping in lamentation stood on the bow looking toward King Arthur, Sir Bedivere supported his king, until the outstretched arms of the queens assisted King Arthur to take his place on the barge.

Slowly the barge began to leave the shore. Standing alone as King Arthur moved into the distance, Sir Bedivere cried out, "I am left alone! What shall I do?"

Kindly answered the king, "The old order changeth, giving place to new—Pray for me, for more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of . . ."

So ended the life of King Arthur, for many years ruler over the Round Table.

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"BEAUTIFUL" LIFE

Alfred, Lord Tennyson, lived a life as beautiful and unreal in its romanticism as that of any hero in his King Arthur stories.

The drowning of Arthur Hallam, Tennyson's college friend who understood and encouraged the sensitive poet, caused Tennyson to suffer a nervous collapse and to live ten years in retirement. At the end of that time he presented for publication "In Memoriam," an elegy to Arthur Hallam, a poem said to have brought more comfort to sorrowing people than any other poem.

Tennyson was not wealthy, and he and his sweetheart wanted to leave the path of his life open for writing instead of trying to earn a less precarious livelihood, so they waited many years before marriage was possible. Speaking of his marrying Emily Sellwood he said, "On the day I married her, the peace of God entered into my soul."

At the death of Wordsworth, Tennyson was made Poet Laureate of England, having long enjoyed the friendship of Queen Victoria. After that he was so besieged by sightseers, that he was forced to move to the Isle of Wight, which place is now famous for having been his home. Tennyson died in 1892, at the age of eighty-three.

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