

SHINING PALACE

By CHRISTINE WHITING PARMENTER

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CHAPTER X—Continued

His mother stooped to caress the soft, fair hair; and Don said gently: "I stand rebuked, Nora. Now I'll be reasonable. What's your idea?" "This," she told him. "Let's buy that barn, Don, and by degrees (as we have the money), make it into a home. To quote old Tom Littlefield, the carpenter at the Port, it was built at a time when 'folks built honest.' It was built to stand. I'll admit that it's not beautiful. The cupola with its ridiculous colored windows is an eye-sore, of course; but it can be taken down—"

"You mean that darling little house on top of the old barn, Mummy?" Young Donald spoke quickly, in alarm. "I love that cunning little house, Mummy. Daddy and me climbed up there once, didn't we, Daddy? We saw the lighthouse way, way out to sea; and a big steamer! Everything looked so kind of cheerful. Daddy 'splained it was because the windows are such pretty colors. Daddy liked it too, Mummy. Don't you let anybody take it down!"

Said Don, who had the wisdom never to laugh when his small son was serious: "The cupola remains. It can be our watch tower. What, my darling," he asked of Leonora, "is a man's castle without its watch tower?"

For the first time in fifteen minutes Nora drew a breath of sheer relief. Don was won! His imagination had started working, and once that got going there was no stopping him. For six years she had been an uncomplaining nomad. Life, despite its ups and downs, its sometimes terrifying hardships, had been rich, and colorful, and adventurous; but there were times when, woman-like, she had dreamed of possessing a real home, even though she knew (being Don Mason's wife) that they would occupy it only periodically. And her dream was to come true! Nora laughed, a laugh so joyous and unguarded that Don realized for the first time, perhaps, how courageously his wife had relinquished her own dreams that his might be fulfilled. The knowledge brought him a sense of his own unworthiness. He said, voice husky: "I'm a moron, Nora—a dumbbell—a complete washout. I hadn't an idea that you were missing—anything. With me, you know, home is simply 'where the heart is.' I ought to have understood that a woman feels differently—needs some place to call her own. Why didn't you tell me? I'm only a blundering man, darling, but I love you and I haven't meant to be self-centered. Of course we'll buy that barn if it's what you want and there's sufficient cash on hand to pay for it! Come on, kiddies! Let's take a look at our future home. Your mamma is more than a wonder, Jimmy. She's something that's utterly impossible to describe, and we don't deserve her. Watch out, Nora! Here's the big wave you prophesied a while ago!" Don's warning came too late. There was a rush—a scramble—a wail of anguish from James Lambert Mason. Safe on the dunes the baby pointed seaward to where his small, red shoe: a tiny, fearless craft amid the breakers, was setting sail across the broad Atlantic.

CHAPTER XI

It was early summer when they bought the stable with its surrounding savin-covered pastures, its stretch of dunes and beach. Don, a smile of understanding in his eyes, presented the deed to Nora with such a flourish that the white-haired notary who witnessed the signatures, inquired if she were planning to "make a palace of that old barn?"

"I've seen her do things even more incredible," laughed Don; while Nora, her face lighting at the old man's words, responded: "It will be a palace to me, anyway—my shining palace. That's what we'll call it, thanks to your inspiration, Mr. Moore. If ever you're tempted to read the modern poets, look up Millay and perhaps you'll understand."

To her surprise the notary quoted without hesitation: "Come and see my shining palace built upon the sand? Well, this future home of yours is surely built upon the sand; and I have no doubt you'll make it shine surpassingly. Yes, I love the poets, Mrs. Mason, though as a rule my taste in poetry is as old-fashioned as I am myself. But I've heard Miss Millay read her own verses, and that makes a difference. Let me know when the latch string is out and I'll pay my respects to the Royal Family!"

"We'll bid you to dine some evening in the banquet hall!" smiled Nora as they turned away. "And who," said Don, when they stood in the sunlight outside the hideous frame building which housed the notary's small office, "who would suspect that aged patriarch of reading the moderns?" "I would," retorted Leonora.

"He's no moss-back, Don. He's a perfect example of what they used to call a scholar and a gentleman. But he'll never know how superbly that quotation fits our case. Father told me once, back in the days when he was fighting the thought of our marriage, that to survive, a house must be built upon a rock."

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

"Don't you see what I mean?" "I see that you don't regard me as possessing the comfortable stability of a rock, my dear!"

"You possess it in the essentials," replied Nora soberly, "which is all that matters; and you've got the lovely changing quality of the sand, as well. When I was a small girl Dad took me to the sea one summer. I used to sit four hours on the beach, Don, and with a wee tin shovel lift off layer after layer of damp sand; and every layer was different from the one before—like beautiful fabrics woven in varying patterns. It used to fascinate me because I never knew what the next



It was Leonora who suggested moving in.

layer would be; and it's the same with you, dear. Just as I'm sure I know you inside out, up springs some quality I hadn't dreamed of! Who wants an ugly house to live in year after year, Don, if one can have a palace for—(for enchanted intervals?)

"I wish you wouldn't say such things on a public street, Nora," complained her husband. "It might shock these repressed, undemonstrative natives of the state of Maine to see a man embrace his wife under a telephone pole! Come on now, let's beard the village carpenter in his den. There's no time to spare if we're to see the beginnings of this home you've set your heart on before we sail for Naples on November tenth."

"Oh, let's not think about November tenth!" Don felt a pang at the protest in Nora's voice. "I want to forget such things as boats and railroads and suitcases for a little while. We've got four months before we have to leave, Don. We can do a lot. And it won't be so hard to go away if our home's in order (or even disorder!), waiting to welcome us again next spring."

Don said, as they turned down a side street: "Would you rather not go to Italy this year, Nora?" "We must," she answered. "I promised Constance. Their villa seems so big and lonely without Ven. And it's such a wonderful chance for you, Don. You can fare forth gathering material to write about, and know that the boys and I are safe and comfortable. Of course we'll go; but it will be so wonderful to know we are coming back! And when Father finds we're really living somewhere—somewhere civilized, I mean (you know his feeling about Europe!), he may come to see us. I—I am sure he will."

Tom Littlefield, a weatherbeaten but vigorous man of sixty-odd, was in his shop; a neat white building at the rear of his comfortable dwelling house. "He makes me think of a tree at timberline," Don said later. "The sort I've seen in the Colorado Rockies, gnarled by the wind, you know, but strong and sturdy."

The man's face brightened at sight of Leonora. It brightened still more when she disclosed their plans. Don, content to stand aside and watch them, saw at a glance that they understood each other, this strangely assorted pair. "I see," the carpenter kept saying. "I see." And when she had finished: "What I'd advise, Mrs. Mason, is to measure up the place and make a sketch of where you want partitions.

I'll run you down in the Ford right now, and we'll look it over. And I'll be on hand at seven sharp tomorrow mornin' ready to begin."

"I'm not a union man, though I've nothin' at all against those that is. But I've been my own master too long now to be willing to take orders. If I want to quit at noon and go fishin' off the point, I quit. If I feel like workin' till seven at night to finish somethin' I set out to do, I work. And I work honest. No one ever complained of a house built by Tom Littlefield. Let's go."

Then, and then only did Don speak. He said, with discretion learned of marriage: "But we'll have to know something about the cost, Mr. Littlefield. This wife of mine has a prejudice against running bills."

The carpenter raised a rugged, protesting hand. "That'll be all right. You're honest folks, and I'm not worryin' about my pay. This little lady has got to be made comfortable. When the job's done, pay what you can, and the balance whenever it comes handy. I been doin' business that way for forty years (so long's I knew the folks I dealt with), and I never lost a copper. Now let's not waste any more time."

Nor did they! It was astonishing how fast the work progressed. For as wholeheartedly as he had ever embarked on an adventure, Don threw himself into the making of Nora's home. Day by day, early and late, he worked beside the carpenter. Nora worked too, at any task she could lay hands on. Even small Donald carried out rubbish with solemn pride in the thought that he was "helping build our house."

Sometimes the old carpenter would disagree with Nora. The size of the living room disturbed him. "It's too big," he protested. "It won't be snug and cozy like a sittin' room should be. It's big as a ball room!" "It is a ball room," retorted Nora, "and as for its being cozy—you wait and see! A baby-grand piano takes up space, you know; and—Oh, don't fuss any more," she pleaded. "I want it big. I've lived in band-boxes for six years."

"Well," sighed the old builder with a dubious shake of his gray head, "it's your house; but remember I warned you."

Don would pause in his hammering when these discussions raged. Sometimes he'd say over his shoulder: "Oh, let her alone, Mr. Littlefield. She's on the war path!" And the grizzled product of the "wild New England shore" would wink solemnly, pick up his tools, and continue to do exactly as Nora said.

They concentrated on the living room at first; and when the partitions were in place and the wide casement windows finished, it was Leonora who tackled builders' paper to the walls of one end, while a mason from the Port constructed a chimney at the other; and Don and Tom Littlefield moved their work bench into one of the box stalls that was destined to become a kitchenette.

"And what I don't understand," grumbled the old man good-naturedly, "is why anyone in their senses should want a sittin' room big enough to accommodate a trolley line, and a kitchen so small you can't eat breakfast there cold mornin's. 'Tain't sensible, if you ask me."

"But I didn't ask you," retorted Nora while he grinned at her impudence. "It's not suitable for a Royal Family to eat in the kitchen, Mr. Littlefield; and besides, those next two stalls are to be the banquet hall."

"What do you think this old barn is?" he questioned sternly. "Wind-

sor Castle? The Royal Family! Whoever heard o' such a thing?" But he kept right on obeying orders; and one day astonished Nora by inquiring where "the royal bed-chamber" was to be—upstairs or down?

Overhearing the question, Don collapsed with mirth. A royal bed-chamber seemed so foreign to this sturdy old builder with the New England twang in his voice, and the New England sense of humor (so often mistaken for something quite the opposite) lurking in the depths of his blue eyes.

The weeks passed rapidly. Mid-August was there before they knew it; but Tom Littlefield continued to arrive at seven o'clock, and not once had he been tempted to "quit at noon."

Don arose early in those days, tiptoed about the shack getting a light breakfast, and sometimes left before Nora was awake. Later she followed with the children and a picnic lunch; the baby took his nap in an old packing box, oblivious to the sound of hammer and saw; while small Donald sat on a nail keg and handed things to his father as requested, forgetting in the absorbing interest that he'd intended tunneling to Italy that season.

It was Leonora who suggested moving in. "It'll save the long walk night and morning, Don. It'll save time; and it can't be much more inconvenient than the shack is now. The living room—" ("Ball room," corrected the builder dryly) "is entirely finished. The fireplace burns like a breeze; and there's a sink in the kitchen even if there's no water running into it."

"And speaking of water," observed Don, "the report on this well water is O. K., Nora. It came this morning. Why shouldn't we move?"

Thus there came a day when with the aid of two Portland movers (hired by Jim Perkins as they passed through town), Nora's beautiful piano stood on the spot planned for it, and Don said: "Christen the ballroom, Nora. Play something appropriate. 'On with the dance, let joy be unconfined.'"

So, seated upon an upturned box, Nora played; and looking up as the haunting strains of "The Beautiful Blue Danube" died away, beheld the entire working force, apparently hypnotized.

Old Tom Littlefield stood in the doorway staring straight ahead through a window that faced the sea. One of the Portland movers (perched on a barrel) appeared to have gone into a sort of trance; while the other was wiping suspicious moisture from his eyes, and Jim Perkins stood before the fireplace, arms folded, head sunk forward, lost to the world.

Don, as the music ceased, didn't look up at all. His wife suspected that he was in the same plight as the second Portland man. Even the children remained quiet; and at last the mover seated on a barrel said: "I remember that tune. Seems as if my wife must ha' played it when we was goin' together."

"That's queer," the other man observed, shamefacedly thrusting his handkerchief into a pocket, "but darned if I wasn't thinkin' that very thing! Kind o'—kind o' brings things back, don't it?"

The carpenter's blue eyes twinkled at this confession. "It sure does," he admitted. "I donno as I ever heard that piece before, but it did somethin' to me. If you want the truth, Mis' Mason, I wa'n't here at all. I was 'seein' Nelly home' after a church supper forty years back. You better look up that piano and keep it locked if you want this downstairs finished by November first."

(TO BE CONTINUED)



WHO'S NEWS THIS WEEK

By LEMUEL F. PARTON

NEW YORK.—The British lion has been taking kicks from all-comers lately, but it stiffened up and began looking a lot more her-

aldic when the ancient bill of rights seemed to be infringed. It was no rubber-stamp parliament which reacted angrily to the army's summary action against young Duncan Sandys, conservative member, who had revealed undue knowledge of air defense secrets. The government was embarrassed and backed up considerably.

The swift parliamentary kick-back was an instance of the latent staying power of the British democratic tradition, as the representative body rattled the bones of its late and great libertarians in telling the executive where it got off.

The row overflows into important political by-ways, as the tall, handsome, loose-gear Mr. Sandys is both a son-in-law and political ally of Winston Churchill who is pot-shooting the government just now in a political no-man's land.

There is a threat of conservative defection to the side of the still ambitious and powerful Mr. Churchill, with labor and liberal recruits, and, according to close observers of British politics, some important new alignments may result.

Mr. Sandys, thirty years old, is still just a rookie in this league, and, like Mrs. O'Leary's cow may not have intended to start anything in particular. He is, however, an energetic and capable young politician and there are those who say he may be another Anthony Eden in a few years. Running for parliament in 1935, he was assailed by the comely young Mrs. John Bailey who was leading the fight for the opposition. She is a daughter of Winston Churchill.

He won the election in a rock-and-sock battle and then, in the chivalrous Eton and Oxford tradition which is his background, he married Mrs. Bailey. She, incidentally, is a granddaughter of the Jennie Jerome of New York who became Mrs. Randolph Churchill and the mother of Winston Churchill. Jennie Jerome's father was one of the fighting editors of the New York Times in the 1860s.

Mr. Sandys, studious and somewhat ministerial, was with the diplomatic service until 1933. He is a second lieutenant in the London anti-aircraft force, a son of the late Capt. George Sandys.

GREECE never had any luck in trying to get the Elgin marbles back from England. Judging from this precedent, American aviators have a long fight ahead in trying to bring back from the Kensington Science museum

in London the Wright brothers' airplane of the historical Kitty Hawk crow-hop of December 17, 1903. Such will be the endeavor of the newly formed association of men with wings.

They will appeal to Orville Wright, who let the plane go to England in 1928, after the Smithsonian institution had tagged the Samuel P. Langley plane as "the first machine capable of flight carrying a man." There is as yet no word from Mr. Wright, who lives and works somewhat aloofly in his office and laboratory at Dayton, Ohio.

That twelve-second flight put him in the history books, brought him a string of honorary degrees and gathered more medals than his plane could lift, but all this was marred by the misunderstanding about who flew first.

He had been trained in science at Earlham college when he and his brother made their plane in a bicycle shop. He continued his studies in aerodynamics and his later contribution was the stabilizing system which has made modern aviation possible. Wilbur Wright died of typhoid fever in 1912.

STIFF-NECKED, hard-boiled General Alexander von Falkenhausen, German sparring partner and coach for the Chinese generals until recently, stirs excitement in Shanghai by predicting Chinese victory.

He says, "I feel sure that China is gaining a final victory and that Japan will fail in both war and peace."

The general and all others of the German military mission to China are homeward bound, suddenly recalled by their government, although their contract, with \$12,000 a year for General von Falkenhausen, was to have run until 1940.

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He was a pork butcher, and he and his sausages had done very well indeed in the town—until a rival came along and, by undercutting and pushful publicity, started to take all the trade. Butcher No. 1 was sitting in his shop musing on what the inside of a poorhouse would look like, when a bright idea suddenly struck him. Changing his clothes as quickly as he could, he hurried to his competitor's shop and, elbowing his way through the crowd of customers, planted a dead dog on the counter. "Ere y'are, Jack," he exclaimed in a loud voice. "That makes the dozen."



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