

THERE IS TODAY

By JOSEPHINE LAWRENCE

CHAPTER III

Footsteps sounded in the kitchen, the door clicked. "Morning, Miz Fitts," Belle, the cleaning woman, called cheerfully.

Toni Fitts encountered old Mrs. Peppercorn in the hall that evening as she prepared to mount the stairs to the third floor. Stair climbing afforded an excellent opportunity to slim the calves and thighs, the beauty parlor instructor had informed her, so that when Mrs. Peppercorn had reached the second landing on her way to the street, the old lady was a little alarmed to see a tall, thin woman balancing herself on one leg with her other knee pressed against her chest.

"Oh—good evening," Toni Fitts resumed her normal stance. "I'm on my way up to see your new neighbors. I don't suppose you know whether the Thanes are at home, Mrs. Peppercorn?"

The old lady shook her head. She had a good deal of very white hair massed under her brown hat. Though both hat and the black coat she wore were perfectly neat, the one was too large and the other too long to be mistaken for the season's models. "They're nice, quiet folks," Mrs. Peppercorn volunteered. "It's hard to tell when they're in or when they're out." Under her arm a bundle of silky white stirred and the bright, mischievous eyes of "Doggie," her poodle, leered at the efficient Toni.

"Well, I hope Mrs. Thane is at home—I tried to phone, but they have no telephone." Toni had been honestly startled by her discovery earlier that evening. "I do wish you'd come down to the workrooms, Mrs. Peppercorn, and see what wonderful things are being turned out. You couldn't resist sewing for us, I'm sure."

The old lady absently stroked the dog's curly head. "I'm not resisting, my dear."

"Well—" Toni tentatively raised a rather bony knee. "I must run along. I left my husband tending the phone and it's never long before a message follows me, no matter where I go. Good night, Mrs. Peppercorn—Doggie's feeling fine, I see."

She climbed the stairs correctly and arrived, very soldierly and erect, at the door of 3-A. She smiled and extended her hand cordially as Andrew Thane opened the door. "Mr. Thane, of course, I'm Mrs. Bertram Fitts—your neighbor in 2-B. I'd love to come in a few minutes and see your wife, if she is at home."

She was at home, the dark young man was assuring her, holding the door hospitably wide. A step into the square hall, then another into the large, pleasant living room and a tiny figure turned from the fire and crossed the rug to greet her guest.

"My wife, Mrs. Fitts." Young Thane spoke as if he were presenting the Fairy Queen.

"You sew?" Toni Fitts glanced curiously about the room.

She had a book that showed how to cut and make slip covers, Candace said. "I haven't a machine and that handicaps me to some extent. I get the covers cut out and basted, then I fit them and make alterations if necessary and then I take them to a friend's house where there is a machine. The basting is tricky, but I'm learning it."

Toni listened half-absently. It wasn't the kind of room that appealed to her, she decided, but her tastes were modernistic.

"We love the apartment," Candace Thane said, smiling above the flowered cretonne that filled her lap.

Candace said earnestly, "I'm making slip covers for the faded upholstery—we had it cleaned. We painted the bookshelves and Andy is going to do a lot more as

he has time. He's really a genius with paint brushes." The rug, she pointed out, was a Brussels carpet square, sprinkled thickly with tiny wreaths of pink and blue roses. "It was Andy's grandmother's carpet. We found it in his attic. I wish we had a pair of those china dogs with curly heads to sit on either side of the fireplace."

"Yes, I've seen them." Toni straightened. "Such things are all very pleasant under normal conditions and in a normal world. I may as well tell you, Mrs. Thane, that I'm hoping to enlist you in a cause that's taking my time and attention to the exclusion of everything else. I refer to the struggle being waged for democracy." Toni Fitts took a gulp from her glass, set it down with such involuntary emphasis that it threatened to crack the crystal coaster.

"We need clerical help at the workroom where we're packing boxes for Britain," she went on. "We need donations, but helpers also. Just two evenings a week of your time, Mrs. Thane, will give us a tremendous lift. And how about parading? I'm to lead the women who are grouping for national defense. In time we'll have uniforms, but we don't want to spend thirty dollars on a uniform, until we know what our duties will be."

Quiet people baffled Toni Fitts, who believed it everyone's duty to keep conversation flowing as freely as salt. "Surely you can come to us for one evening a week, Mrs. Thane?" Toni suggested.

She was sorry, Candace Thane said clearly. "We need our evenings, Andy and I. Neither of us makes an engagement that ties us up in advance. My husband studies three nights a week, here at home. The rest of the time we need to get our rooms in good order."

There was something old-fashioned about the setup, Toni decided. Aloud she said, "We're all making sacrifices. It might help you to do more for others, if you budgeted your time. Now, for instance, if you had a telephone—"

They couldn't afford a phone, Candace demurred, turning a radiant face toward her husband. "And the way we feel about our time—well, everything is so uncertain, we place a high value on the hours we can have together."

The older woman shrugged her thin shoulders. "You took an awful chance, getting married before your husband was called. There's been a lot of criticism of men who married after the Act was passed and then claimed exemption."

"I'm not claiming exemption," Andrew Thane looked soberly at the fire.

Toni sighed. "Well, I've wasted an hour. And I dashed up here without my knitting, so I've accomplished just nothing. I don't suppose you'd agree to knit, Mrs. Thane? We supply wool at cost to those who are able to pay for it."

"Perhaps a little later," Candace smiled. "If a dollar will be of any help to the wool fund, I'll be glad to give you that. You have a dollar, haven't you, Andy?"

His curiously old, veined hands brought out his new, saddle-stitched wallet and his stubby, blunt-tipped fingers extracted a clean dollar bill.

"You ought to get your wife one of our pins, Mr. Thane." Toni took the dollar with a brief "Thanks." The pins sold for as little as two dollars and a half, she continued, and were the sort of thing that in time became heirlooms.

Someone wished to speak to Mrs. Andrew Thane on the outside phone, Sarah Daffodil announced.

nounced on the house phone a few evenings later. "I offered to take the message, but it's very personal," Sarah said cheerfully, when Candace Thane came down. "There on my desk—I'll be in the kitchen, if you need me."

The telephone conversation lasted less than five minutes. Mollusc-colored lights gleamed in Candace's wide, deep waves as she put her head in at the kitchen door. "Thank you so much, Mrs. Daffodil. It wasn't so very personal—a woman I'd never met."

"My grandmother's sewing chair has a soothing effect on the nerves." Sarah seated herself on the lovely carved sofa and waited.

Candace's steady fingers lighted both cigarettes. "I'm not upset, only annoyed: That call was from the British workrooms. They expected me down there this evening, to straighten out their files. A Mrs. Graham phoned and she insisted I am pledged to work two evenings a week."

"So?"

"The simple truth is that I've refused from the first. Mrs. Fitts asked me, then someone named Myrtle Ryder wrote me and tonight this director-in-charge calls. No one understands. Andy says it isn't necessary that they do. Do you think it is necessary, Mrs. Daffodil?"

Sarah put her roughened hand over the smooth little palm up turned on the girl's lap. "Do I think explanations necessary? Not unless you need to convince yourselves."

"You have always understood, haven't you?" The quiet, clear voice did not quicken or falter, yet heartache and unshed tears lay for a moment unconcealed behind the tranquil brown eyes. "There are so many like us," Candace said. "We are young now, but no one is young very long."

That's it, thought Sarah. I've wondered what it is so different about them and now I know. It's their terrible awareness—no other generation but took youth for granted. We assumed it lasted forever. They don't. A fragment of verse published in the world war she remembered, still haunted her, returned to her mind now: "They give their youth, God bless them, as lightly as a rose."

But this generation of children, Sarah reflected heavily, has learned somehow what no youngster should know—how briefly we are young. Aloud she murmured, "You're just beginning to live, my dear."

"We looked at it from all angles," Candace Thane said. "And we decided that no matter what might happen we'd have a few weeks or months or perhaps a year of normal happy marriage. If we waited until after the war."

"We're not at war."

The girl said with a grave certainty that chilled the older woman, "We shall be. But we figured that if we waited, nothing could ever be the same. Andy might not come home at all. We'd be older and there'd be all the memories of our loneliness and unhappy separation. Now already we have had something that nothing can take away; we've been happy while we're young."

"Andy and I don't go about sentimentally sighing that life is beautiful—but we don't take it for granted, either. Every day we have together is wonderful. Just going to business and coming home at night to each other, means everything. There will be plenty of time for me to do war work. Until Andy goes, we plan to keep our free time for each other."

She had not intended to stay so long, Candace apologized, or to say so much. Andy would have finished his homework and they had planned to take in the second run at the movies. "I hope you won't think we're a couple of softies who like to feel sorry for ourselves."

Miss Velda was young and blonde and soothing. She said that everyone was nervous these days and that Mrs. Fitts ought to take a little run down to Atlantic City. As she talked she shook out snowy towels, draped them about the gaunt, tense woman in the leather-padded chair. "Why don't you take a short vacation over Easter?" the girl urged, deftly backing the chair and its occupant up to the basin. "First thing you know, you'll be having a breakdown."

She couldn't go away for Easter, Toni murmured, closing her eyes as the warm water began to cascade over her hair. Perhaps she had undertaken too much, but she had promised to have four British seamen for dinner that Sunday. "The committee asked us to open our homes and

Ennice News

I. W. Wagoner
Staff Correspondent

Mr. and Mrs. Alex Andrews, who have been in Maryland for several months, have returned. Mrs. Andrews has been employed in a defense plant there.

Mrs. Woodrow Galyean recently left for Maryland to spend a few weeks with relatives there. Her husband, Sgt. Galyean, is in service, somewhere overseas.

Mrs. Hobert Jones, who has been in Missouri for several months, where her husband has been in training, has returned to live with her mother, Mrs. E. H. Smith. Mr. Jones was recently transferred to New York.

David Easterling, Jr., who spent the holidays with friends at Carolina Beach and with his mother, Mrs. Elizabeth Easterling, here, has returned to resume his studies at Chapel Hill, where he is a sophomore this year.

Mrs. E. R. McMillan had as dinner guests recently, Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Higgins, of Oldtown, Va.; McCamant Higgins, Mr. and

make the men feel as if we were their own families. I'm asking my niece and three of her friends so the sailors will have some companionship. It meant a lot of work. Toni added, because the newspapers had taken a great interest in the plan and they were sending up photographers to take pictures of the dinner table and the guests.

"My, will you be in the picture too?" Miss Velda's firm long fingers vigorously massaged her client's scalp.

Toni didn't know, but she thought it likely. "Of course I'm not keen about it and I really loathe the publicity. Still, it's for the organization, not for me. We hope that this is only the start—that women throughout Garsert will be willing to follow our example. They say that these men are pathetically grateful to their hostesses and hosts. It means a lot to a man far away from home to be a guest in a private home. Don't let the water run in my ear."

Her cousin's husband was with the Canadian forces, Miss Velda said. "He doesn't care much for the food, but then I've heard that the U. S. has better cooks."

(To be Continued)

Conservation Farming News

By W. O. HOOPER

"That steep hill facing the north is tender land," said Bruce Sturgill of Piney Creek, "but you can see that it is covered with a good blue grass sod. Well, it has never been plowed and never will be while I own it; because, if it is once plowed, it will be impossible to get that sod back."

"Now, you take this other hill above here," Mr. Sturgill continued, "and you can see that it is exactly the same type of soil, but not quite so steep. Still, there isn't any sod on it. That's because it was plowed several times and enough top soil washed away to make it impossible to get a good sod started there. Of course, it is getting worse all the time and should be planted to trees," Mr. Sturgill concluded.

Burning over pasture land is a bad practice, according to R. M. Mabe, of Piney Creek. Year before last, Mr. Mabe had a splendid pasture field of white clover, but the broom sedge was so bad that he decided to burn it in the fall. After being burned, the broom sedge is stronger than ever, but there was no white clover last summer.

Orderly marketing of hogs to relieve a glutted market will help to maintain prices.

oner, of High Point.

Mrs. L. C. McMillan and little son, Mack, of Galax, are visiting Mr. and Mrs. W. D. Gordan. Mr. McMillan is somewhere overseas. W. C. Higgins, who has been seriously ill with pneumonia, is improving.

M. A. Higgins and S. J. Spurlin went to North Wilkesboro, Tuesday, where Mr. Higgins attended a directors' meeting of the Northwestern Bank.

Mrs. Kyle Todd and daughter, Elizabeth Ann, of Galax; M. A. Higgins and Miss Mildred Wag-

Belk's Dept. Store

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Terrace Lands During Winter

During the winter is a good time for building terraces and they should be used on all fields where the slopes are steeper than 4 per cent, recommends David S. Weaver, head of the agricultural engineering department at N. C. State College.

He points out that terraces reduce the speed of water flowing down the hill, lowering the amount of run-off and the carrying capacity of the water. The faster the water travels, the more soil it can carry, stripping fertile soil from rolling areas and depositing it in the stream beds or lower flat areas.

He calls attention to the fact that the basic principles of terracing are the same today as when they were announced by P. H. Mangum of Wake Forest in 1895. Some changes have been made in methods of terrace building but the principles remain the same.

"Many counties have terracing units, which have rendered valuable service, and increased interest has been shown in terracing in recent years, but still there are many thousands of acres which should be properly terraced," Weaver says.

Terracing, combined with cov-

INCOME ESTIMATED AT AROUND 42 BILLIONS

Washington — With an 11-month total of \$128,242,000,000, substantially higher than for any previous full year, Commerce Secretary Jesse Jones estimated this week the national income was \$142,000,000,000 in 1943.

The previous high for a full year was \$115,500,000,000 in 1942. In 1939 it amounted to \$70,900,000,000.

Income payments (salaries and wages, dividends and interest, rents and royalties, social security, benefits, etc.) totaled \$12,420,000,000 in November, 16 per cent above November, 1942, but three percent below October, 1943.

er crops and proper rotations, can greatly increase yields and improve the value of lands that are now losing more and more of their top soil each year.

Proper terracing requires the services of a man trained in the use of a modern level. Not only is the proper lay-out of the terrace essential but it must also be properly built and maintained. "Terraces too small in cross section and without sufficient carrying capacity may prove to be more harmful than beneficial," Weaver says.

Farmers wishing help with their terracing problems should contact their county agents.

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The O. P. A. office has made ceiling price of \$10.50 for 160 cubic feet of chestnut wood delivered to the mill by truck and that price is now being paid by the

WILKES EXTRACT WORKS
North Wilkesboro, N. C.

who will take chestnut wood in any quantity and every day except Sunday.

Tan bark will have very good market this coming year.

Information given by: W. F. DECKER, Langren Hotel, Asheville, N. C.