

SHINING PALACE

By
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WNU SERVICE

THE STORY

CHAPTER I—James Lambert tries in vain to dissuade his beautiful foster-daughter, Leonora, from marrying Don Mason, young "rolling stone," whom she likes but of whom she disapproves according to his conventional business-man standards. He tells her, "Unless a house is founded upon a rock, it will not survive." Leonora suspects the influence of her half-brother, Ned, always jealous of the girl since the day his father brought her home from the deathbed of her mother, abandoned by her Italian baritone lover. Don arrives in the midst of the argument, and Lambert realizes the frank understanding between the two.

CHAPTER II—Sitting up late into the night, Lambert reviews the whole story of Nora as a child, at boarding school, studying music abroad, meeting Don on the return trip. In the morning he delivers his ultimatum, to give Don a job with Ned for a year's show-down. When Nora suggests the possibility of running away with Don, Lambert threatens disinheritance. Don agrees to the job, but before a month is over, his nerves are jumpy, he cannot sleep at night, he is too tired to go out much with Nora, and admits to her that he feels stifled. Nora soothes him with her music. He falls asleep and his face is more peaceful than it has been in many weeks.

CHAPTER III

Nora grew noticeably thoughtful after that evening. Don had slept for a long time while she sat beside him gazing into the fire, as if its slowly fading glow might light her way. It was all so futile—this whole experiment, she mused. The time-worn smile of the round peg in the square hole came back to her. That was Don, poor boy! She knew full well that the year's sentence James Lambert had imposed on him would make no difference in their future; yet unless he stuck it out the older man would look upon him as a failure—a ne'er-do-well.

What was her duty? the girl pondered. It was useless to expect a product of the metropolis like her father, to understand or even make allowances. His whole world was the well-ordered world of the successful business man. His horizon was bounded by city streets. What more should one ask of life than a steady job and a salary which supported in comfort those one loved? was his sole argument. He saw no other. He could not comprehend what such an existence meant to Don, nor dimly vision that call of the Gypsy trail which tugged at the young man's heart, leading him onward, making of life a glorious adventure.

So the girl grew more thoughtful, more quiet in the days that followed. Don said: "You've lost your pep, darling. What's happened?" and Nora laughed at him. But when her father questioned her one evening, a night when Don, pleading a dull head, had gone home early, she made no effort to evade the answer. He said: "Something's upset you lately. What's the matter, child?"

"Life," said Nora. James smiled. "What's wrong with life, dear?" "What's right?" countered the girl, shrugging.

Her father's eyes grew puzzled as he regarded her.

"Have you and Don been quarreling?" he asked.

Nora laughed softly. "It would be hard work to pick a fight with Don," she answered. "No, we haven't quarreled; but—I'm worried about him, Dad."

"There's nothing to worry about, my dear. Things are not going badly. I'll make a business man of Don Mason yet, Nora, if you'll give me time."

"You'll make a corpse of him more likely," the girl retorted with so much bitterness in her voice that James raised his head, looking at her in blank amazement.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that all his nerves are raw—on edge, Dad."

"Nerves!" The contempt in her

father's exclamation cut Leonora to the quick.

James said, after a tense silence: "See here, Nora, it's absurd to think that a year in a well ventilated, modern office can cause a breakdown such as you hint at. That young man is, was anyway, the picture of health. If there's anything bothering him now it must be, as you say, a case of nerves, which seems, to my mind, almost nonsensical. If he'll make an attempt to pull himself together—get the best of the trouble instead of dwelling on it—"

"Dwelling on it!" broke in Nora with indignation. "Why he's never mentioned it! But I'm not blind, Dad, and the signs are there for anyone to read. I think you ought to call 'time up,' don't you?"

"Time up?"

"I mean it, Father. This simply can't go on. Don's lived in the open since he was eighteen. Office life stifles him; and Ned . . ."

She paused, while her father observed gravely: "We'll leave Ned out of this discussion, if you don't mind."

"How can we?" the girl demanded with intrinsic honesty. "Ned's half the trouble. He makes Don frantic, pouncing on him unexpectedly—watching everything he does—snooping—"

"That's both insulting and unjust," James interrupted angrily. "Ned means to be helpful. If his methods are upsetting to this young man it's not your brother's fault, Nora, but his own. And considering that—that—"

"That Ned would welcome an excuse to throw Don out the door?" finished Leonora. Then, as her father snorted, she went on: "Now don't explode, Dad. It gets us nowhere, besides being bad for you. Perhaps I have no right to ask a favor anyway, but I'm asking one now: If you've any love at all for me, darling, and I know you have, I ask you to show it by putting an end to this experiment."

But James was obdurate. He was also angry.

"I gave him a year, Nora. I don't like a quitter."

Two red spots flamed like twin banners on Nora's cheeks.

"That's not just, Father. Don's never suggested giving up. But there's something in him that you and Ned can't understand, I suppose. He's not impatient, Dad. I think he scorns himself a little for chafing at things which other men accept so naturally. And that's bad for him too. Don't you see, Father, it's like whipping a tired horse to keep a man of Don's sort tied to a ledger. It stifles him. And I warn you now that rather than see his spirit—the thing I love about him, crushed and broken unnecessarily, I'll go away with him."

The man's lips tightened.

"And forfeit all I mean to do for you, my dear?"

"Money's not everything, Father."

"How should you know, who've never been without it?" he retorted. "Ned's right. I've spoiled you, I suppose; and now I must pay the penalty." Then, because he was hurt and angry James said something he regretted later. "Well, take your choice; but if the fellow quits, and you quit with him, I'm through with you, Nora. And when the cupboard is bare—when the lack of silk stockings and silver slippers becomes hateful and you're tired of your bargain, don't come to me for help. Remember that."

Had he struck the girl, he could not have hurt her more.

Never before had her father felt such anger at Leonora. That she should even contemplate the idea of eloping with Don Mason, after what he considered his forbearance in giving the young man a place in his own office, was utterly beyond James Lambert's unimaginative comprehension. Since that long-gone, tragic day when the girl discovered their real relationship, her foster-father had felt that she was grateful for everything he had tried to be to her. Now he wondered; and, wondering, grew bitter. Yet in a pathetic, lonely way James could not bear to be at odds with Leonora, his wife's last gift to him. Tossing restlessly on his bed that night, he longed to go to this dearly loved daughter whom he could not always understand—to make his peace and ask her to forget his harshness; but because of a stubborn streak deep in his nature, the

man could not do it; and this illumined moment which would have brought them infinitely closer, passed and was gone.

It was, however, no small measure of comfort that the girl's morning greeting was unchanged. If Nora's night had been as restless as her father's, nothing revealed the fact. She kissed him as usual; poured his coffee and chatted amiably of nothing in particular. But that evening James, who had been thinking, invaded the room where Leonora was playing to her lover, and sat for a half hour watching the young man closely.

Nora was right, he admitted. The fellow had changed deplorably. Queer, that he hadn't observed it sooner. Don looked what James called "peaked." And he was very pale; not paler than Ned, perhaps, but shockingly paler than he had been six months ago.

Still, was there any reason for alarm? James thought not. Don's pallor was merely the result of an indoor existence. Absurd for Nora to worry about his health. In another month or so he would become acclimated—get used to it—stop champing at the bit as he did now. And there was no doubt that Don Mason needed discipline. He'd been his own master since he was eighteen. It was high time he learned to meet responsibilities, or how was he to take care of a girl like Leonora? And they were both young enough. It wouldn't hurt them to wait a little longer. He'd give them a trip abroad as a wedding gift if Don would agree to settle down after they got back.

James smiled to himself, pleased at this new idea. It should be a trip de luxe, by George! A trip such as that young vagabond had never dreamed of. Trust Nora for that! She appreciated the luxuries of travel. Only a few months to wait; and unless Don proved himself a quitter . . .

He arose, roused by the cessation of Nora's music. She said: "Want something, Daddy?"

"No. I've left my book 'round somewhere; but it's not here."

Don, too, had risen. He said, smiling: "Won't you stay for a while, sir? I haven't the exclusive right to Nora's evenings."

"Perhaps not," responded James, "but I haven't entirely forgotten my own youth! Besides, I want to turn in early. Lost sleep last night, and the music has made me drowsy. Good-night, daughter."

He kissed her; nodded pleasantly to Don, and went upstairs.

"I don't wonder your father hates to give you up," said Don. "If ever I have a daughter as sweet as



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you, Nora, I'll be forced to stifle murderous intentions toward any fellow who makes love to her."

"And yet," she answered, "Dad hurt me last night, frightfully."

"How, dear?"

She told him, not all, but part of that momentous conversation.

"It was cruel, Don. I—I almost left him. I came near going straight to you and begging you to run away with me."

"I'm not the sort that runs,

Nora," he said.

She considered that.

"Not even if I asked you to, my dear?"

Don shook his head.

"Never—unless things get more desperate than they are now."

"But you're nearing the end of your rope, Don," she protested. "What good will it do us to stick it out if you lose your health?"

The young man laughed, confessing: "I'm a lot more likely to lose my temper! Sometimes—"

He stopped abruptly, and Nora asked: "Has Ned been bothering?"

"Oh, let's forget it!" Don said in an attempt to end the discussion.

"I'm going home, Nora. I seem to sleep better when I turn in early. I don't see how you put up with me—a girl like you. I never show you any sort of a good time. I even forget when I promise to take you to a dance! I—honestly, dear, I've wondered lately . . ."

"What have you wondered?" she questioned as he looked away.

"I've wondered if it might not be better for us to—part, Nora."

The girl caught her breath, then said, her voice unsteady: "Better for you, or—me, Don?"

Sensing her hurt he took her into his arms with tenderness.

"For you, Nora! For you, of course, sweetheart. For me—Well, without you there would be nothing left, nothing at all. Don't cry, Nora. I've never made you cry before. It hurts me. Things will go better after this. I promise to buck up—take life more calmly—try to remember that nothing really matters if you don't despise me. The biggest part of the year is over now. We'll stick it out, as I said before. We must, you know."

Nora looked up, winking away the tears as she said gently: "We must try, of course. It would be so terrible to hurt Father. But it's the last small straw that breaks the camel's back, Don. Don't forget that."

(Continued Next Week)

ECONOMIC HIGHLIGHTS

Happenings That Affect the Diner Pails, Dividend Checks and Tax Bills of Every Individual. National and International Problems Inseparable from Local Welfare.

From the business standpoint, the year 1937 can be compared to the year 1929. During the first half, industrial production rose with pleasing steadiness—as it did in 1929. Security prices moved gradually upward, with no important set-backs. The bad signs were far outweighed by the good signs, and it seemed a certainty that the recovery movement would go ahead without impediment. Then, early in the second half of the year industrial production started to fall off slightly—again, as it did in mid-1929. And in October, the values of securities took the fastest drop in American history, with shares as a whole depreciating approximately 45 per cent in a period of a few weeks. Thereafter, the business indices started on a swift decline which wiped out most of the progress that had been made since 1934. In many lines the last week of the year was the worst, in spite of a generally good Christmas retail trade.

The financial periodicals have all published their traditional "annual review and forecast" issues. General tenor is expressed by Business Week, when it says: "The year 1938 opens on a low note, but chances are better than fair that it will end on a substantially higher one." The Wall Street Journal hopes that "the influence of mental attitudes on the volume of business transactions has . . . reached its maximum," and states that "probabilities are that the present business depression will not last far into 1938." Individual prognosticators, such as Ayres and Babson, seem generally convinced that this depression will be short lived. There are a few who feel that it is destined to turn into another major depression unless

a drastic reversal of many present policies occurs, which is unlikely. Some of the most clear-sighted of the experts belong in the group which see the future as being far from bright.

To get down to actual facts, the statistics are not favorable. During 1936 and 1937, the automobile industry probably did more than any other to provide employment, purchasing power and to stimulate industrial activity in general. It was expected that this industry would have another big year in 1938. But that hope, in all probability, will not materialize. The used-car problem has become acute; dealers' inventories are at excessive levels. As a result, new car sales have undergone an exceedingly sharp drop. This is reflected in curtailment of production by the industry, with lay-offs of labor and plants working on a part-week basis. Both General Motors and Chrysler, which issue figures, recently cut production and payrolls heavily. The other member of the Big Three, Ford, does not issue figures, but is believed to be in a similar condition as the others.

The steel industry closed the year at the lowest rate of production since September, 1934. However, there is an encouraging factor here—a steady rise in the markets for steel scrap, plus stable prices, leads to the belief that consumption of the basic metal is running strongly ahead of production.

Declining income on the part of the railroads has also been a major depression influence. The industry has reduced its purchasing to the bare necessity point. Business, in general, hopes that the ICC will permit the requested increase in freight rates, in order that railway purchasing and employment may be raised.

A less specific, but highly important factor is the continuing "war" between the Roosevelt Administration and business. The recent speeches of Ickes and Jackson added fuel to the fires of investor pessimism. However, the President's two latest addresses—to Congress and at the Jackson Day dinner, while far from reassuring to business, were milder than many expected. It is the general opinion that Mr. Roosevelt is marking time and testing the state of the political weather through the acts and talks of his underlings, and that he has not made up his mind which way to turn. There is still a chance that he may steer the New Deal in a somewhat more conservative direction.

On the favorable side, the signs are largely psychological. All the financial magazines lay heavy stress on the apparently growing congressional sentiment in favor of co-operation with business and the alleviation or repeal of laws which business feels are hampering. The labor situation seems a little better than it was a few months ago—in a time of declining production, labor tends to temper its demands on management and there is less sympathy among the rank and file in favor of radical action. There will be much less talk about higher wages and shorter hours until the depression is ended.

The price situation has both its favorable and unfavorable side. The price decline continues, in spite of the efforts of some industries to hold prices to "prosperity" levels. This tends to spur buying. On the other hand, a severe price break would make additional cuts in industrial earnings, and so exert a further unfavorable influence on activity.

Job insurance, now in effect in half the states, will help to reduce the loss of purchasing power resulting from increasing unemployment.