

SHINING PALACE

By
CHRISTINE WHITING PARMENTER

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THE STORY

CHAPTER I—James Lambert tries in vain to dissuade his beautiful foster-daughter, Leonora, from marrying Don Mason, young "rolling stone," whom he likes but of whom he 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 showdown. 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 grows quieter, and broods over Don, complains to her father of Ned's spying on him, and decides that rather than see Don's spirit broken, she will run away. She urges her father to put an end to the futile experiment. James Lambert is obstinate and angry. Lambert tells her that if Don quits she will quit with him; that he will be through with her. He adds that if she tries to bargain it will be useless to argue to him for help.

CHAPTER IV—With the coming of spring, Don is full of unrest and wanderlust, and takes long walks at night. One evening a poor girl speaks to him, and in his pity for her, he gives her money. A car passes at that moment, flashes headlights and moves on. A terrific heat wave ushers in the summer, and Nora refuses to go to the country with her father. Ned, meanwhile, insinuates to his father about Don's evenings away from Nora, but Lambert refuses to listen. Meanwhile, Don broods over the undermining of his morals.

CHAPTER V—At the height of the heat wave, when Don is finding everything insupportable, Ned speaks of having the goods on him, having seen him give a girl money. When Ned scoffs at the true story of the episode, Don knocks him down, and is through. He calls Nora, who insists on running away with him to get married, realizing it is her job to restore Don's faith in himself. Her good-by to her father is met with complete silence.

CHAPTER VI—Don and Nora go to Maine and settle down in the studio of Carl Venable, a famous artist friend of Don's, whose daughter he saved from drowning. Nora writes her father. There is no answer, except her baggage, containing her entire wardrobe, and \$1,000 hidden in a gold mesh bag.

CHAPTER VII—After a tranquil summer, which partly restores Don's health, Don and Nora accept the Venables' invitation to Capri for the winter. Nora realizes she is to have a baby, but says nothing to change their plans. She is also reluctant to go so far from her father, and writes him of their sailing. At the dock, Nora, feeling that her father is there, waves good-by.

CHAPTER VIII

On the evening of the day when Don and Leonora sailed for Italy, Ned Lambert looked up from a leisurely perusal of the evening paper, and exclaimed: "Of all things! Mr. and Mrs. Donald Mason on the passenger list of the Larino! They sailed today. Do you suppose Dad knew it?"

Corinne, painstakingly wading through the most talked of novel of the month and bored to death by it, laid down the book with a sense of momentary release.

"He must know. I dare say he's paying for the trip. How else could they manage it? Your father may pretend he doesn't help them, Ned; but can you see him denying Nora anything she may have set her heart on? Of course he knows."

"I'm not so sure." Ned arose, walked uneasily across the room and back again, pausing beside her chair. "I'm not so sure," he repeated. "Dad never speaks of Nora; and once, when I ventured to ask a question about Don, he shut me up in a way he hasn't done since I was twelve years old! That's straight, Corinne. I don't know that he ever hears from her; but if he happens to see this passenger list and discovers that she's left the country, it may upset him. Want to go 'round and see how the land lies?"

Corinne glanced at the novel. "I really can't, Ned. This book is to be reviewed at the club tomorrow, and unless I'm willing to appear a— a moron, I've got to finish it. And it's the dullest thing I ever tackled. Long, solid pages without a word of conversation. Run along by yourself. I'll try to get through it before bedtime."

Ned laughed. Though he kept it well throttled, he was not without a mild sense of humor, and his wife's struggle to do the proper thing sometimes amused him.

"I'd rather be considered almost anything than to read a book which bored me to that extent," he told her frankly. "Sure you won't go? I sha'n't stay long; and we both need exercise. Mustn't get tubby as we get old, Corinne."

"Tubby!" Corinne, who was proud of her expensively colored figure, bristled with indignation. "You'd better compare me with other women of my age, not with those slinky stenographers in your office. But I can't go anyhow, even if I do need exercise. I must write to Junior. He may be homesick these first days at school."

"That's right," said Ned. "Give the kid my love, dear; but please don't send him any money. His allowance is ample; and it isn't good for a boy of his age to have too much."

Corinne smiled pleasantly; nodded good-by; and said to herself as the front door closed: "Well, I didn't promise, and it won't do a bit of harm to slip in something. A boy likes to make a good impression on his schoolmates; and considering our position in society Junior's allowance isn't what it should be. That's Father Lambert's doings. He's forever harping on the notion that too much spending money spoils a boy; yet when it came to Nora nothing was too much for her to throw away. I'll write the letter now, before Ned gets back."

Ned Lambert reached his father's house and, inserting a latch key, opened the door quietly, dropped his hat onto a chair, and went toward the living room. Nobody here! Perhaps his father was in the library. Ned moved down the hall. A fire blazed cheerily on the hearth in this smaller room, but the davenport with its gorgeous Bokhara covering on which James sometimes threw himself for an after-dinner nap, was now unoccupied.

Dad must be away, thought Ned. It was stupid not to have called up before walking over; but his father hadn't mentioned an engagement, and he seldom went out evenings these days. Perhaps one of the maids would know. Ah! here was Martha. Good old Martha, ever on the alert for burglars! She'd heard his prowling and . . .

"Oh, it's you, Mr. Ned! I thought it might be someone who didn't belong here."

Ned smiled. "You're a good watchman, Martha. Is father out?"

"He's upstairs, Mr. Ned."

"Upstairs! Isn't he feeling well?"

"He had John light the fire in Miss Nora's room. He's taken to sitting there quite often."

"He has?"

Ned's eyes looked puzzled, and with a cautious glance toward the wide stairway, Martha closed the door. Corinne once said that Martha Berry was as much a part of James Lambert's fine old house as the front door was. She had lived there for half of her more than fifty years, keeping his house beautifully, a faithful servant of the old order, and a friend to all who bore the name of Lambert. She said, reading the question in Ned's eyes:

"It's this way, Mr. Ned: The house is so—so still, you see, without Miss Nora. It's like a tomb. Even my cook notices the difference." (To Martha Berry James Lambert's servants were her own.) "She would have given warning weeks ago if I hadn't scolded her. I said: 'Don't be a fool, Sally. There's no one else can make a black bean soup that sets well on Mr. Lambert's stomach, and he's very fond of it,' so she stayed on. But she says the stillness makes her nervous, Mr. Ned, and I think she's right."

"The coffee wasn't clear this morning. Your father likes old-fashioned coffee, made with an egg. There's none better, but it has to be made with care or the grounds won't settle. Sally's as good a cook as I ever had. She knows your father's ways, and she's good tempered; but



"The house is so still without Miss Nora."

she misses Miss Nora. Your father likes her cooking but he doesn't tell her so. Why should he? But Miss Nora was always running into the kitchen. She'd say: 'Oh, Sally, that cream pie was simply wonderful' or, 'Don't you ever dare get married and leave us, Sally. I could

die happy eating your potato puff!'—You know her way, Mr. Ned—not dignified maybe, but my girls loved her and it kept them happy. My housemaid cries now when she dusts the piano. She always left the door ajar when Miss Nora was playing, and many's the time Miss Nora asked her in to listen.

"You can see for yourself that it's not the same place without your sister; and Mr. Lambert feels it. That's why he sits there in her room so much. It makes her seem nearer. I know as well as if he'd told me, which he'd die rather than do, or my name's not Martha Berry. He's stubborn, your father, if you'll excuse my saying so. Not that he isn't the finest man that ever lived, as I've reason to know if ever anybody had.

"You were a boy at the time, but in my mother's long illness he paid all her bills. If she had been his own mother he couldn't have done more; and he sent my nieces to business college, too. But for all that he can be stubborn when he gets a notion into his head; and there've been times during the last 30 years when if I hadn't known my place, Mr. Ned, I would have thrown things at him."

Martha spoke so seriously, and looked so like the ideal servant she really was, that it was impossible for Ned Lambert to suppress entirely a laugh at the idea of her throwing teacups at his father. And being herself not utterly devoid of humor, the woman surmised his thought and smiled, a respectful little smile as she continued:

"Maybe you're thinking I don't know my place, after all. Maybe you think I'm an old meddler; but you were a little boy when I came here, Mr. Ned, and it was I opened the door for your poor father the day he came home carrying Miss Nora, and she looking like nobody at all—poor lamb!—in her outgrown coat. Never will I forget her thin little wrists coming out o' those coat sleeves; and her big, sad eyes, and the trustful way she looked up at Mr. Lambert when he set her down.

"You see, you're my family, all of you, Mr. Ned; and I can't bear that your father's stubbornness should break his own heart and Miss Nora's too."

"He should remember that this is the United States, not one of those foreign countries he hates to travel in where folks pick out husbands for their daughters and hands 'em over like they was bags of meal. And it's a good boy she's married. He gave me his seat in the subway one o' my days off when I was going out to my niece Clara's to have supper. It takes a gentleman to give up his seat to a woman he's seen wearing her cap and apron—an old woman too, and not good looking!"

"Now go up to your father, Mr. Ned; and if you can make him see that it's only a mule that'll bite off its nose to spite its face, it'll save him a headache."

She opened the door, then as Ned remained silent, added stiffly, remembering "her place": "I beg pardon if I've offended, Mr. Ned."

It was then that Ned Lambert gave way to one of the impulses his wife deplored ("Oh, Ned! she's only a servant!")—an impulse that would have made Nora cheer. Perhaps he was remembering the times when in some childhood illness Martha had sat by his bed through the long, dark hours of night, "keeping him company." Or that it was Martha he went to for comfort on that terrible day when, a heart-broken lad of nine, he learned that his mother was never coming home. Whatever it was, Ned crossed the space between them and put his arm around those faithful shoulders in a boyish hug.

"Offended! How could you possibly offend! How could you, Martha, after all you've done for us? But there's more to this business than you understand." The man's face darkened. He was recalling a hot June day—a blow that had left his jaw lame for a week. "There are things one can't forgive, or . . ."

He paused, not knowing just how to proceed; and the woman said, in the gentle way she had told him many truths in the years gone by: "Excuse me, Mr. Ned, but there's nothing we can't forgive—if we care enough. Run along up now. Run up and see your father."

(Continued Next Week)

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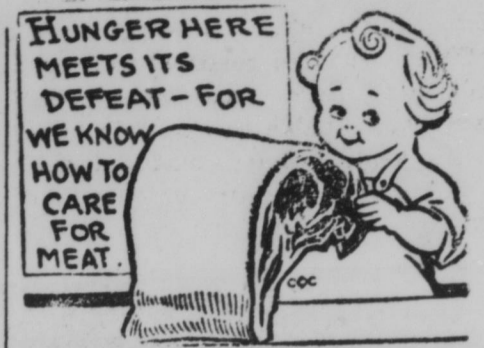
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