

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 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 obdurate 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 tires of her bargain it will be useless to come 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 morale.

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—Ned, reading of the Masons' sailing, goes to see his father, and has a talk with Martha, the old housekeeper, who bemoans Lambert's stubbornness which is breaking his own heart and Nora's. Ned finds his father in Nora's old room, and when he offers to buy her old bed, Lambert asserts it is not his to sell, but belongs to his daughter. After Ned's departure, Lambert reads Nora's letter again, and wonders if she saw him on the pier.

CHAPTER IX—Nora's first son is born in England, while Don is successfully writing "Letters from Capri" for a London editor, and selling them in America, with Venable's illustrations. Assigned finally to Cape Town, Don comes down with typhoid, followed by the baby, and Mrs. Venable writes of Carl's drowning, leaving his last gift to Nora, a baby—*and piano*.

CHAPTER X

The rest seemed easy to Leonora compared with all that had gone before. Yet the night when she found Don asleep over the weekly "Letters from Cape Town," his head dropped forward on the kitchen table that served as desk, one still-thin hand clutching a stub of pencil ("Too tired to use his typewriter, poor boy!" she thought compassionately), and discovered that instead of spending long days in the open as he'd led her to believe, getting back strength lost in his illness, he had for weeks been going into Cape Town to help load freighters at the docks because it meant more money—immediate money, the girl wished for one bitter moment that they had never met.

"Oh, Don, what have I brought you to?" she cried; and he responded in an effort to console her:

"To something better, I hope, than the careless boy you married, Nora. We've been growing up, I suppose; and growing pains leave scars on some of us. Give me time, darling, and I'll get back my old stride."

It still hurt Nora to think about that night.

And the next morning!

In Don's absence a letter arrived from the London editor. Nora opened it eagerly. According to her husband's contract each article was to be paid for when received; and the "cupboard was bare," or nearer bare than she liked to think about. But to her surprise no crisp, blue check fell from the envelope. It contained merely a letter and a manuscript. The editor was, it appeared, courteously puzzled. His contributor's work seemed to be slipping—was surely not up to its customary standard. The last few



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installments had seemed forced—as if he were writing under pressure, not for the joy of narrating his adventures. They lacked utterly the charm of all his former work. For both their sakes he was returning the last "Letter from Cape Town."

For a long time Nora sat stricken, staring at those words written in neat longhand. Under the circumstances it was not a disagreeable letter. It was merely cold. It made her think of a hypercritical parent reproving a careless child. It would hit Don like a blow between the eyes.

After a while she drew the manuscript from its envelope. For weeks Nora had been too worn and tired to peruse the articles her husband was sending out. Now, reading critically, her heart sank still lower. The editor was right. This wasn't one of Don's joyous narratives. It was the work of a harassed, half sick

man, driving himself on because the need of money was imperative.

Part of the thousand dollars James Lambert had tucked into her gold mesh bag had paid the charges at the nursing home in London. The rest (long saved for an emergency), melted away during the months of sickness in South Africa. Dreading to run up bills, Nora had paid the Cape Town doctor at every visit, not realizing that if the man possessed a conscience he would doubtless have deducted something from the sum total. There had been medicines, too, expensive medicines; and nourishing food that cost real money. And now Don, burning the candle at both ends in a desperate effort to provide for his loved ones, was failing to make good. She would not show him that letter. She could not.

What Nora did was to sit down at the kitchen table, spread out the rejected manuscript and proceed to imbue it with the missing charm. And because she knew her husband's style so well—because she had listened spellbound while he talked of his adventures, she did it superbly. Her tired eyes lighted as she read it over, knowing by instinct that her work would "get across." And then she made the wisest move of all: wrote simply and honestly to the London editor (she had to check herself from beginning the letter "Dear old life-preserver"!); confessing what she

had done to this Cape Town Letter—telling him something of the unforeseen troubles which had descended on them—agreeing to watch over her husband's work, speaking quite frankly of the reason why they must return to England at the time planned. And at the end: "You will understand, of course, why you must send no answer to this letter; but if in its present form you find the article available for publication, kindly forward a check to Mr. Mason as soon as possible . . ."

"And never let anyone persuade you," she said months later when Don learned the truth, "that Englishmen, for all their cold exteriors, haven't the warmest hearts in the whole world!" For just when her husband was beginning to worry about the missing check, a letter arrived bearing the familiar heading. The editor, it seemed, had learned of his contributor's recent illness, regretted it deeply, and suggested not trying to write till he was quite himself. Enclosed was a check for the last article (an especially good one), as well as for the three to follow, "on which, my dear fellow, you are at liberty to take your time." And with kindest regards to Mrs. Mason, he remained very cordially indeed . . .

"But how in thunder," asked Don, lifting puzzled eyes from this welcome missive, "did the old boy learn that I've been sick? And why does he lug you in all of a sudden?" "Well, don't ask me!" responded Nora, so guilelessly that for the time being Don hadn't a suspicion of her intrigue.

After that things really did improve. The tension lessened. Don did better work. The little son was growing rosy; and Nora, rested herself, admitted (although it went against the grain to do so!) the surpassing beauty of Cape Town harbor—the grandeur of Table mountain rising majestically behind the city.

Thus a day arrived when she braved the eyes of a scandalized community, and stopped at the house of a woman who, like a ministering angel, had appeared one chill, gray dawn to offer help.

"Whoever sees me will be horrified, I suppose," she said to Don, "but after all, why should that matter? I was at the breaking point when she helped me out, you know. It wouldn't be decent not to say good-by to her."

"Of course it wouldn't." Don turned from locking a steamer trunk to add: "I'll go with you, dear."

But Fate had other plans. Because of some error about their stateroom Don was called away; and Nora went alone.

"I just dropped in to say good-by." Her hostess, obviously astonished at the call, was leading her into a small, tidy living room. Nora had not expected its surprising neatness. Then she saw that the woman herself looked neater—more self-respecting, and continued: "We leave for home tomorrow; and I've never half thanked you for all you did for us."

"You don't need to, lady." The voice sounded a shade breathless. "It wasn't—nothing. I—" The woman, seated across the little room, arose suddenly. "I heard you folks was pullin' out tomorrow and I got somethin' for you—a sort o' good-by present, if you don't mind. I was goin' to carry it over after dark."

Touched, and a trifle puzzled, Nora watched her open a bureau drawer and take out a small box tied with a bit of scarlet ribbon.

"Will—will you promise me something?" she asked, her voice still shaken.

"Why not?" said Nora. "Weren't you a real friend in time of need?" "Friend!" echoed the woman, a nervous, unsteady laugh escaping her. "Well, lady, it's this I want: Promise you won't open this box till you're out at sea; and—and that you won't never try to get it back to me, no ways."

"That's easy," smiled Leonora, anxious to put the other at her ease. "Why should I want to send it back?"

"You'll know when you see it. Your man might not like to have you take it—from me, you know. But you tell him that if I was to kick off sudden some guy would steal it off me most likely. And—and I want you give it to you—most

more'n I ever wanted anything. I—" she hesitated, then broke out passionately: "Say! you're the first good woman that's spoken a kind word to me for 15 years! I'm dirt to 'em all; but if they knew how I got this way— Well," her voice dropped, dully—"that don't matter now. I'm used to it. But you keep that safe, lady. I come by it honest. A man give it to me once—the only decent fella I ever knew . . ."

And next morning, a bright, clear morning as if Cape Town were doing its best to overcome an unfortunate impression, they set forth in a second-class cabin (Oh, shades of Leonora Lambert!) on what was to be a most momentous voyage. Safe in the depths of Nora's handbag lay a small white box tied with a scarlet ribbon. The English boy, reluctant to see them go, was on the wharf. His was the last face they saw in Cape Town. His the last voice they heard. Above the confusion of departure it reached them clearly: "Good-by and Good Hope!" South Africa's farewell to the departing voyager.

(Continued Next Week)

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2:06 P. M. Lv. Washington	Ar. 11:50 A. M.
3:07 P. M. Lv. Greenville	Ar. 10:52 A. M.
3:32 P. M. Lv. Farmville	Ar. 10:18 A. M.
4:27 P. M. Lv. Wilson	Ar. 9:25 A. M.
5:26 P. M. Lv. Zebulon	Ar. 8:25 A. M.
5:36 P. M. Lv. Wendell	Ar. 8:15 A. M.
6:20 P. M. Lv. Raleigh	Lv. 7:30 A. M.

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