Alabaster Lamps

By Margaret Turnbull

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STORY FROM THE START

Claude Melnotte Dabbs, returning from New York to his grocery store in Peace Valley, Pa., brings with him a stranger, Ned Carter, whom he introduces to his housekeeper, Aunt Lyddy, as a chance acquaintance. Ned tells that he has broken with his folks because of their pacifistic leanings. Visiting in Clover Hollow, the two men almost run over a dog belonging to a girl whom Ned recognizes. Later Ned delivers a grocery order, and in his absence the girl, Dorothy Selden, tells Dabbs that Ned's name is Rangeley and that he is the son of the famous banker. Next morning Ned, starting to work as a delivery boy, takes an order marked "Johnston" to the "White House," where he meets Mary Johnston. She tells him the servants have left, leaving her alone with her mother. Ned promises to get new servants. Meeting Dorothy, who is his former fiancee, Ned evades explaining his presence in Peace Valley. He arranges with Ettie Pulsifer to begin work with the Johnstons, but she is unable to start at once. Ned returns to tell Mary about hiring Ettie, and in explaining this matter to the mother is astonished at her emotion when Dabbs' name is mentioned. The cook arrives, and Mary and Ned start to town for groceries. They are seen by Dorothy Selden. Worried over financial difficulties, Mrs. Johnston is bothered by Dorothy, who warns her there is something suspicious about Ned.

CHAPTER V—Continued

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Dick Hanna was still holding forth: "Yeh, but that Selden girl ain't in it with the new one that has come to the White house. I mean that Miss Johnston. You saw her driving with Ned Carter. Wish't I had his chance. I'd be driving with one hand all right. And even she ain't in it with her mother. Gollies! I wouldn't believe it was her mother."

"Stepma, mebbe, but they don't act like it. They're awful close and fond of each other, them two. The mother's a thundering fine figger of a woman. She's a widder with money, I believe. She kin have me for her second whenever she names the day!"

Laughter filled the shop. Claude decided to go. Dick Hanna always made him feel around for a handy club.

"An' while you was achipping around moles, Ike, I called to mind that one of her's," Dick continued. "It's right on the tip of her ear, brown and flat, and lays against it like one of them drop earrings. Say, I'd like—"

The door banged so loudly they all looked up.

"Guess Claude's remembered he's forgot somebody's orders."

Claude Dabbs put the orders into the truck mechanically. His mind, which Ned had catalogued as calm and philosophical, was in the state which Claude himself had long ago diagnosed as "that d—n excitable temper of mine."

Claude argued with himself that there was no earthly reason, after all these years of nothing happening, to get heated up because he'd heard of a red-headed woman with a mole on her ear. Of course there was the name "Johnston," but it was a common enough name. Anyway, it would be her husband's name. There it was; he must be at that "dangerous age" everybody was writing about, if he got so excited about some Johnston's widow and daughter.

That was another thing—a daughter! If the woman he was thinking of was at the White house, where would a daughter come in? It was not, he assured himself, worth thinking about.

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To Claude's astonishment and pleasure, Ned seemed content and happy in helping him about the store, or running the car to and fro between Clover Hollow and Peace Valley.

Ned, Claude observed, never spoke voluntarily of Dorothy Selden and made no effort to meet her. The vexed question of his real name slipped into the background of Claude's mind, save for those moments when he looked upon him with a fatherly eye and wondered what Loren Rangeley was thinking of.

Gradually it came to pass that Ned delivered all the Clover Hollow orders. Claude never crossed the White house kitchen steps, nor did he see anything of the Johnstons, save an occasional glimpse of Mary going through the village in the car, with Ned at the wheel. Mrs. Johnston never came to Peace Valley. When Claude was honest with himself he admitted that this was a relief. If by any chance she was the woman he feared, what would he say to her when he saw her? Until he was sure of that—he would make no move.

Ned, obeying nothing philosophical or studied, drifted along, caught, as he put it to himself, in the maelstrom of Peace Valley. He was indifferent to the danger of discovery which Dorothy Selden represented. He was sure that Dorothy was "too good a scout" to give him away, and he was equally sure that she wanted to forget him as much as he wanted to forget her.

It never occurred to Ned that Dorothy was simply biding her own time, determined that when she struck at him the lovely Mary Johnston should feel the blow. As a matter of fact, Ned was doing very little thinking. He was creating a fool's paradise which one sentence from Dorothy would destroy; dreaming of a place in this peaceful little world, whose chief inhabitant was Mary. To be received or rejected on his own merits as Claude Dabbs' nephew, and not Loren Rangeley's pampered and eligible son; surely that would be a triumph worth while. He sought diligently to make himself popular in the store and the village and indispensable at the White house.

Ned had the field practically to himself. Save for the Saturday to Monday week-ends, when men appeared at the hospitable Mannheim's, there were no available swains.

It was a time when a cautious or ambitious mother might well have taken alarm, for Mary was indisputably intrigued. She had never before seen so much of a youth in Ned's position. This young man had thoughts, ideas and habits that too closely approached her own to admit of only a country store as background.

However, being human, Mary did not tell her mother everything. For instance, she simply could not tell her mother that this grocer's clerk gave her the feeling that she, Mary, was utterly right and charming, no matter what she said or did. It was something to treasure up, and remember when she was alone.

Mrs. Johnston, like a cornered animal, was wholly taken up with one great and pressing problem—how to get out of her corner. Other and lesser problems simply did not exist for her. She disliked inaction and hated the policy of "waiting to see how the cat jumped," yet there was nothing for her to do but wait. Always before this, when things became in any way impossible, Mrs. Johnston had simply turned her back and run away from them. Now, without money to run with, she must stay here in this quiet country place which, like a false prophet, kept breathing "peace, peace" when there was no peace—for her.

This morning, in the hope of distracting her mother, Mary was urging a ride to Hillsborough, not only as a chance to see the country, but because Mr. Carter said there was an inn there where the food was good.

Mrs. Johnston did not look enthusiastic, but intimated to Mary that she did not mind trying.

While Mrs. Johnston put on her hat, Mary found Ned in the kitchen, deep in an argument—heated on Mrs. Pulsifer's side—as to some new potatoes for the use of her own family, which she had expected Ned to bring with him.

Mary's entrance hushed the storm, but unfortunately, owing to the clamor that had greeted her, she used her employer's manner. Ned was annoyed. He received his instructions moodily and went outside to look at his engine.

Mary found her mother looking out of the window at Ned.

"Mary, it might be as well not to go, because—"

Mary indignantly interrupted. "Why not?"

Being somewhat of a diplomat in her relations with her daughter, Mrs. Johnston wisely contented herself with saying: "Dorothy Selden seemed concerned to see you riding with the grocer's boy."

Then she laughed. Mary's head went up.

"Maybe it would be diplomatic not to use this young man so often," Mrs. Johnston suggested. "Let him go back to the shop today. Tomorrow we will go with one of the other men as driver."

"And let that interfering little cat think we take her seriously?" asked Mary. "Indeed not! I'm going to Hillsborough, and with that young man! If you do not care to come—why, I'll go alone."

What could her mother do but laugh, and go along, though she thought to herself: "Little fox! What is she up to now."

Before they reached the car she paused to say: "Be very sure I will take a good look at this young man! If I like him, we will continue to champion him and his driving. If I do not—he's dropped!"

"We can't drop him far," Mary rejoined. "He's got to bring the groceries, you know."

For one appreciable second, Ned forgot the chauffeur manner he had intended to try out on Mary. He stared. Mrs. Johnston was his excuse. This was the first day she had consented to ride with them. Ned found himself looking into two sleepy brown eyes that saw more than one guessed, and at one of the handsomest women he had seen in many a day. The color of that hair alone, he admitted to himself, was enough to make anyone look twice. Her mouth was oddly disconcerting. It looked capable of sneering. Then, quite suddenly, she smiled.

"If Mother were my sister," Mary thought, watching her with that odd pride in her mother's beauty that made her depreciate her own, "no one would ever look at me!"

Mary paused before she followed her mother into the car. "Oh, Mother, just a moment. This is Mr. Carter, Mr. Dabbs' nephew, who has been so kind in driving me about."

Following the introduction, Ned helped Mary in very carefully. This was the moment for which he had waited, and Mary had stood the test. She had not "Cartered" him to her mother.

Neither Mary nor her mother knew Hillsborough. Ned had visited it several times with Claude Dabbs, and suggested the Iron Hand inn as their destination. The idea was acceptable to Mrs. Johnston, who merely stipulated, "Anywhere, except Peace Valley."

Mrs. Johnston was conscious that she was one person too many. It was curious. Not a word or a look that she might object to, yet the feeling was strong. Mrs. Johnston was irritated. She had much to worry her. Surely it was impossible that her precious, level-headed Mary could be about to further involve them. Mrs. Johnston, who was really tired, tried an experiment. She closed her eyes, complaining that the air made her sleepy. Contrary to her intention, it really had that effect. When she opened them, some fifteen minutes later, Mary was on the front seat with Ned.

"Oh, Mother, I didn't want to disturb you. Mr. Carter's been telling me such interesting things about the country."

Mary joined her mother at once, but Mrs. Johnston was not pleased with the result of her experiment.

When they had crossed the cobblestone parking space to the entrance, both Mary and Ned waited. Things were in Mrs. Johnston's hands. She knew it. She could not treat this young man as a paid driver.

"Mr. Carter," she began a little hesitantly, "since we've so freely accepted your uncle's car and kindness, won't you accept my invitation to luncheon?"

It was very graciously put, but Ned knew how little Mrs. Johnston wanted him, even if she was thoroughbred enough to ask him. He thanked her, vowing that he had an errand to do for his uncle but would take them in and introduce them to The Iron Hand.

He strolled along a quiet residential street which terminated in an old graveyard. He sat down on a flat tombstone, and thought about life and Mary.

"Hey, Ned, for one minute I thought you were a monument!"

Claude Dabbs was smiling at him over the fence.

Ned rose and went to him.

"Thank Heaven I saw you first," Ned said. "I told the Johnstons I had to do an errand for you. Come back with me."

Claude, however, was too busy to do more than stop at a lunch counter near the courthouse, where he had to look up several property records. As they ate he listened absently, Ned thought, to a description of the morning's drive. When they had finished, Claude said he would walk with Ned to the door of the inn.

As they reached the inn, the door opened to admit a large party of cheerful farmers' wives and children. Through the door, which the last lumpy child left wide open, Ned caught a glimpse of Mrs. Johnston, Mary and the proprietor. They were examining a print, hung rather high above the hall wainscoting. Mrs. Johnston's glorious hair and strongly modeled head were thrown into relief against the wall.

"Quick, C. M. Look! That's Mrs. Johnston."

Just how much does Claude Melnotte Dabbs know about Mrs. Johnston? You've a big surprise coming!

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

French Rural Life Sees Little Change

In the France that I know the workmanship of handicrafts and gardens and woodlands and inn kitchens and wine cellars and vineyards; the frugalities, the fetes, the austerities, the relaxings, all these things overwhelmingly continue.

Mme. Aubain still sits beside the white wainscoting, looking through the windows at the life of the street; Felicite is still at work from the kitchen to grenier; notaire, small banker; peasant-proprietor, physicians, shepherd, housewife, market stall, town drummer, abbe, hotel keeper, marchand de vin, blacksmith, haute bourgeoise, local moyenne and petites bourgeoises, local watchmaker, chair caner, bellows mender, woodcutter, local barons and marquises, even, are still all in the places where they have been for half a thousand years.—From "A Mirror to France," by Ford Madox Ford.

Wrap Your Parcels

To "carry your package home" in Japan is the matter-of-course thing to do.

If it is a "lady of high degree" she will produce from the capacious depths of her kimona sleeve a lovely time-softened old silken length that may have come direct from the Seven Thousands Gods of Japan or from Honorable Ancestors. It is considered ill-bred and common to a degree to carry a bare package through the streets.

THE TEMPTATION

"Whatever induced you to marry me, anyway, if I'm so distasteful to you?" he asked fiercely.

"I think it was the ads," she replied.

"The what?"

"The advertisements. The household bargains, you know. I thought it would be so lovely to go to the department stores and buy ice picks for only 9 cents and 25-cent egg beaters marked down to 15, and so on. Of course I had no use for that sort of stuff as long as I remained single."

HOPELESSLY LOST

"Would you believe it? That girl follows all the beauty hints she reads."

"Well, she certainly is a long way behind them."

No Great Change

The mummy, 'mid adornment great,
To murmur did contrive:
"I am as useful in this state
As when I was alive."

Salvage Work

In the middle of the channel swim the fair contestant suddenly dropped below the surface. When she finally reappeared her manager was frantic. "Great heavens, girl!" he cried, "I thought you were drowned! Why did you dive there?"

"There's a rock down there I parked my gum on last year," answered the swimmer calmly.—Pathfinder.

Athletic Attainment

"How has your Josh been doing at school?"

"First rate," answered Farmer Corntossel. "I kind o' think he'll make his way in congress. One of the professors speaks mighty well of him."

"Which one?"

"The professor of boxing."—Washington Star.

WOULDN'T JIBE

He—Wonder how we'd get along in double harness?

She—What! A deer and a jackass?

Help in Need

I have no use for lawyers,
That I have I won't pretend;
I admit, though, one comes handy,
When a felon needs a friend.

Just Thrown Away

Discouraged Jim—Mother, I will not try again for the conduct prize. Some other fellow always gets it.

Mother—Don't give up; try, try again.

Jim—I'm through, mom; it's a clean waste of goodness to go on.

That's Something

First Spinster—Is it true that you're going to be married, Miss Antique?

Second Old Maid—No, but I'm thankful for the rumor.

Worse Still

He—I made an awful mistake just now. I told the man I thought the host must be a stingy old blighter, and it happened to be the host that I spoke to.

She—Oh, you mean my husband.

The Present Day

Jim—What did the jury do to the thief of the precious Hommerblit necklace?

Ned—Found him not guilty, but advised him to return the necklace.

WHAT TO SEE IN TOKIO

A Studious Tokyo Newsboy.

(Prepared by the National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.)

TO GET a mental picture of Tokyo one must hold clearly in mind that Japan's capital is not really a city but a collection of towns and villages, grown together. These settlements preserve their entity in the 15 "wards" frequently mentioned in dispatches relating events in the city.

Tokyo has a peculiar sentimental tie with our own national capital, because the Japanese cherry blossom trees in Potomac park, in Washington, constituted a gift to us, which was recognized by sending to Tokyo a consignment of American dogwood trees. There they form an annual magnet for thousands of Japanese residents at the time of their blooming.

When one sails up the bay of Tokyo to Yokohama, and buys a railroad ticket to Tokyo, he senses the distinctive group form of Japan's capital. For the ticket reads "Shinagawa," or "Shinbashi," not "Tokyo."

The Imperial palace is in the aristocratic ward, or "Ku," known as Kojimochi-Ku. In this palace, originated by Ota Dokwan in 1456, formerly lived the Tokugawa Shoguns. This palace bears witness to the frequent casualties of Tokyo; it often was burned, the last time in 1873. It is not accessible to the public. A Japanese guide-book naively says, "Ordinary people are allowed to approach only as far as the end of the first bridge outside the outer gate." The palace grounds are surrounded by two moats; the perimeter of the outer one is about five miles. In this ward also is the central railway station, with buildings occupying two acres. One of four entrances is reserved for the use of the imperial family.

The Latin quarter of Tokyo lies in Kanda-Ku. Here is the Tokyo Higher Commercial school, the first school of that kind established by the government when it launched upon a policy of adopting western business methods. Upon the grounds of this school grow pine trees which are survivors of the grove standing there when the school tract was part of the Shogun's pleasure park. This ward also is famous for a willow-tree thoroughfare, its second-hand clothes stores, and a Shinto shrine which dates to the Eighth century.

It Is an "Official" City.

While each ward retains distinctive characteristics of the time when it was a separate town, and each has its own business section, Tokyo as a whole has a distinctive individuality. It is an "official" city, and frankly so.

Official hours, official guides, official guide books and official seasons for various sights and scenes are officially proclaimed. You come away with a sense of having been officially conducted through a fairyland of cherry blossoms, of noisy lotus flowers that bloom with a detonation, of doll's festivals, of Geisha girl dances.

The old survives alongside the new. The Geisha girl continues to perform though the cafeteria has made its advent in Tokyo. The Geisha girl is an institution hard for the western mind to comprehend. Her most comparable functionary in the western world was the court jester—long since passed away. She is a modern prototype of the private entertainers of wealthy medieval nobles. She is of a class different from the women of Japan who cling to their semiseclusion amid the inroads of modernism; but she is not of the type which westerners class as the demimonde.

Restaurants and tea houses in Tokyo still have their Geisha girls. The Japanese business man, student, official, or visiting farmer are the patrons. More often it is a party of men friends whom the Geisha girl entertains with song, dance and monologue, and for whom she acts as a sort of hostess.

Custom does not fill these restaurants with husbands and wives, men and their fiancees, or friends of opposite sexes, as in America. But the wish to have members of the other sex present is just as strong in Japan as elsewhere. Hence the Geisha girl.

Outside the pervading sense of official regulation there is infinite variety in Tokyo. Exclusive Kajimachi is very different from bourgeoise Kanda. Busy, bustling Nihombashi, with its "Broadway" and "Billingsgate" is a far cry from Shiba, village of the tower gate and giant hill, native restaurants and distinctive dances.

Easy To Find Your Way Around.

For the humble traveler by the tram, it is exceedingly difficult to get lost in Tokyo. Each car bears the number of its route and inside, at the place where, in America, one would see hosiery and washing powder advertisements, there is a comprehensive map of the city criss-crossed and circled by lines of many colors corresponding to the numbered routes. A knowledge of the language is superfluous. From the guide-book map, or better from the free map furnished by the Japan Tourist bureau, which seeks to make Japanese travel delightful, one locates the place he seeks and the place where he stands. Then it is a mere matter of matching numbers and colors to any spot within the circular railway which forms the rim of the transportation wheel.

This idea of placing a map of the city in the cars themselves instead of on some sequestered wall around the station may rob the traveler of the cultural advantages of tempting pictures of butter and motor cars, but it makes it easy to wander from village to village within the city limits with the minimum of delay and sign language.

Nihombashi is a principal business quarter of the city, although each of the wards is more independent, commercially, than the various sections of most cities. The center of Nihombashi and of Tokyo, is the bridge which in olden times was a measuring point for distances to places throughout the empire. Formerly it was wood; it was rebuilt in 1911 of granite. It is the thoroughfare from each end of this bridge which popularly is known as "Broadway."

In Nihombashi is the Bank of Japan, occupying a building especially designed to be earthquake-proof. One part of the building has three stories underground for strong boxes, and this part can be flooded as protection against fire. In this same section of modern banks and office buildings is a Shinto shrine where charms are dispensed which are supposed to be efficacious in such diverse emergencies as shipwreck, child delivery and being the victim of a liar.

"Newspaper Row" is in Kyobashi-Ku. Here are practically all the principal journals. Shiba-Ku contains the mortuary temples of the Tokugawa Shoguns. A concession to foreign visitors is indicated by the announcement, "Boots need not be taken off, as covers are provided to slip over them."

In Azabu-Ku is a Buddhist temple, memento of the years before Shintoism took firm hold. Shintoism has been kept alive in Japan from the dawn of the empire. Tokyo, as Japan's capital, became a stronghold of Shintoism because officialdom of Japan support it ardently.

Three Dangers to the City.

The introduction of western buildings greatly enhanced the danger from earthquakes in Tokyo. The fragile houses might be burned and often were, but could not maim their occupants under piles of mortar and stone. Fireproof warehouses were provided for groups of such buildings and when the alarm of fire was sounded the occupants carried off their valuables to these storage places.

Tokyo has had three particular furies of her own to harry her over and over again: pestilence, fire and earthquake. From the close of the Sixteenth century when the old fishing village of Yedo blossomed into a city at the order of the ruling Shogun, these three have from time to time taken heavy toll of life, and the latter two, of property.

Perhaps the most terrible of the many fires that have destroyed great blocks of the inflammable houses of Tokyo occurred in 1657 when 107,000 persons are said to have lost their lives in the flames. The number of palaces destroyed is placed at 500 and the residences of other nobles at more than 700, while between 300 and 400 temples were burned.