

Stairs of Sand

By Anna M. Regan

(Continued from Last Week)

CHAPTER TWELVE

Hedda Leavitt was all in a flutter as she held the door open to admit Sara.

"What on earth has kept you?" she cried irritably. "You said you were only going to the post office to send Carol and Reg's wedding present. Everything has happened here and not a soul to help me!"

"Why, Hedda, you've been crying!" said Sara. "Well, who wouldn't cry! Neil came to tell me that he's leaving for California two weeks earlier than he intended. I don't know how I'm ever going to face it. And I've asked him to stay for supper and we've got beef hash and macaroni, of all things in the world! And Grandmother says she's coming to the table—and she's getting so hard of hearing, think of it—tonight of all times! And I can't find the sideboard key anywhere—"

"Just a minute," said Sara, blithely. "I'll change my dress and be down in a minute."

What did she care for lost keys and beef hash, when the end of the world seemed just ahead! Neil was going! Giving him up after all had been a useless sacrifice when he failed Hedda. Hedda's woe-begone countenance had torn her heart. How they would all miss Neil. Hedda would miss his flowers and his candy and his weekly visits. But, after all, their love affair seemed only a faint afterglow of love! So different from the vibrant, glowing, thrilling thing which she hoped to experience some day.

The supper was not a success, in spite of Sara's high spirits and Neil's kindly presence. The latter did his best to distract attention from Hedda's red-rimmed eyes and quivering lips. He told many anecdotes, was assiduous in his attention to Grandmother Delight. He even went to the length of pronouncing beef hash one of his favorite dishes.

Sara, watching him, admired and criticized at the same time. He was so calm in the face of everything. He had been such a loyal friend to everyone in the family. Now that he was about to go, she saw him in all his kindly simplicity. She thought of his magnanimity with regard to the business entanglement in which Nat had involved himself. She thought of the admirable way in which he had submitted to her decision in the delicate and difficult triangle that threatened between him, Hedda and herself.

"And what is Miss Sara twinkling about now?" he asked, as he felt her eyes upon him.

"As a matter of fact," she replied, "I was thinking about you."

"Then I distrust your twinkle," said Cramer, archly. "You haven't yet said you were sorry I am going."

"Well, I am. We all are." Then she added lightly. "Of course, you'll be coming back to see us sometime."

"I trust so," said Cramer, and Sara saw his well-trained eyes stray for a moment of unguarded tenderness toward Hedda, who sat staring at her plate, her lips caught between her teeth, her eyes swimming.

A sudden regret swept over Sara that neither Hedda or she had succeeded in winning Neil.

After she had gotten Grandmother to bed and read to her father, she excused herself and went to her own room. She felt that Hedda and Neil would straighten out their love tangle better, unhampered by the presence of a third party.

It must have been near midnight when Neil Cramer left, and a few minutes later, Hedda's cautious steps ascended the stairs and approached Sara's door. Somehow, she shrank from an interview with her sister tonight. Tomorrow she would comfort her and try to reconcile her to the fact of Cramer's departure. Tonight, she felt unequal to it. But already Hedda was at the door.

"Sara," she called softly, "are you asleep?" Sara, sitting up, saw her sister's small figure in the doorway. Her fair hair about her was like a halo, and even in the dim light from the hall, one could see that her eyes were shining.

"Sara!" she cried, rushing forward and burying her head on her sister's shoulder. "He loves me! He wants me to marry him!"

"To marry him?" repeated Sara, dazed.

"Yes. He wants me to marry him and go out with him."

Sara sat frozen into immobility. A black abyss suddenly yawned before her, and into it, she saw all her secret hopes of getting away, tumbling, one by one. She stared straight ahead of her, her arms limp at her sides, forgetting everything but the pain in her heart.

With her Grandmother in bed, Sara insisted on three months' time before vacating. The lawyer telephoned and secured the extension of time to everybody's relief.

"Sara! My darling sister!" cried Hedda. "Don't take it like this! I know you've never cared particularly for Neil, but he really is splendid. And he thinks you are so wonderful, Sara—please—"

"But to marry and go away off there, where we'll never see you again," Sara protested sorrowfully. "Only last week you said that nothing would make you leave home, because you couldn't bear the separation."

"Yes, I know, Sara. But I never dreamed he would care for me like this. I've been simply mad about him since the first day I met him on the train. But he was so handsome and sought after, that I didn't dare hope he would ever care for me. He sees no reason why you can't easily take charge of things here. He says you are such a tower of strength."

The tower of strength collapsed on the bed. Sara's brain was a seething turmoil of protest and rebellion. What right had they to leave her at Cherry Lane Farm, anchored to a feeble old woman and invalid father and a broken-down estate? Why should she be called upon to forego a chance at the outside world for an indefinite time of dreary waiting, maybe to run once more the risk of wrecking her life for the sake of the family.

"Why, Sara," Hedda pleaded, kneeling down beside the bed and trying to draw her sister to her. "I had no idea you would take it like this! Don't you want me to be happy? Haven't I spent many years here working and playing with you?"

"Yes!" Sara admitted dully.

"Then why shouldn't I accept this marvelous happiness that has come to me? You know how wonderful he is. He says we'll have a home overlooking the Pacific, and I am to fix it up exactly as I like. Think of that, Sara, when we've never dared move a picture here. He says maybe we'll be able, later, to transplant the whole family to that beautiful land. Why, it's a dream of Paradise!"

Her lips trembled and her eyes filled.

"Don't think of me!" said Sara sharply. "Don't think of anyone but yourself. That's the way to be happy. That's what I should do if I had it to do over again."

"But you couldn't Sara. You are so much finer than I am. Neil says you are the most unselfish person he has ever known."

Sara gave the pillow a savage jab. If Hedda quoted Cramer again, she would surely scream.

"What will the family say?" she asked in order to gain time.

"Oh, dear, I can't imagine! But that will not stop me. Nothing will stop me but you. I thought you'd be happy for me; and I thought you would sympathize; and now—"

"I have nothing to do with it," said Sara, stonily. "It is your own affair."

"But you have!" protested Hedda. "You have been the most marvelous, self-sacrificing sister in the world! If my marrying makes you unhappy, I'll give him up if it kills me!"

"No," she said. "You have a right to live your own life. We all have. Only, some of us never seem to be able to work it out."

Sara shook her head miserably.

"But Sara, dearest, you will be able to draw now? Think of all the time you will have with only Grandmother and Father to look after."

Sara found herself unable to attach any importance to Hedda's words. It was as if her mind refused to consider the proposition. And all the time, there was Hedda, who had lived through and borne so patiently the infirmities of the family. Following an old habit, Sara gathered her small, ineffectual sister into her arms and proceeded to comfort her.

"Hedda, I'm a beast," she said with a catch in her voice. "It's wonderful that this could happen to you. You and Neil Cramer were made for each other."

"And you give your consent? And it's not going to make you too unhappy?" asked Hedda. Then not waiting for an answer, she said hysterically, "Oh, I don't deserve to be the sister of such a girl as you, or the wife of such a man as Neil Cramer."

"I shouldn't let that worry me!" said Sara grimly.

"But you don't know how it feels to be in love. Of course, you have had boy and girl affairs, but they are nothing compared with this. Some day, you'll understand how I feel tonight. He is never out of my thoughts for a second. When he told me so suddenly that he was going away, and I faced the possibility of losing him forever, I just went all to pieces. I know pride should have kept me from letting him see how I felt, before he had spoken to me, but he was simply wonderful! Oh, Sara, do you think I can be worthy of him?"

Sara was not listening. She sat on the side of her bed, her jaw set, her mouth a straight line, and her eyes stony. Her one idea was that she must hold herself steadily in hand until she could be alone and meet her own problem face to face. The bright hope of liberty to make her own life had once more burst at her touch. A sleepless night followed by a day of acute mental distress for Sara, for the rest, Cherry Lane Farm buzzed with excitement.

Events exploded like a string of sky-rockets. The news of Hedda's engagement resounded through the various family channels, then Lois arrived and confided the news. Had Sara not been heartick, she would have to secrecy. Then Grandmother had a chill, and had to be hustled to bed and subjected to the regime of rest and diet. But the climax was reached for Sara when her Grandmother's lawyer came to inform them that a company had taken them up on the sale of Cherry Lane Farm and that they would have to vacate in one month's time.

"We'll have to tarry the wedding!" protested Hedda. "I've always had my heart set on a church wedding too."

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

Unrest Spirit in Free State Cause of Worry

Secret Drilling of Republican Army, and Intimidation of Courts May Lead to Drastic Action.

Dublin, Aug. 21.—There is a spirit of unrest in the Irish Free State, and it is causing alarm to the government officials. Cases of illegal military drilling are reported almost daily, and in certain parts of the South, jurors are intimidated, with the result that it is almost impossible for the State to obtain a verdict in the courts.

Aged Carmelite, First in America, Buried Monday

Rev. Bernard Fink, Formerly of Buffalo, Dies in Pittsburgh and is Buried in Cemetery Here

Pittsburgh, Aug. 21.—The Rev. Bernard Fink, saintly pastor at Holy Trinity Church here, the first American to become a Carmelite, died last Friday in the rectory at the age of 78.

Funeral services were held Monday, and Father Fink was buried in Mount Carmel Cemetery, which he himself purchased in behalf of the parish when he was pastor more than 40 years ago.

Father Fink was born in Buffalo, N. Y., and educated at Canisius College and St. Vincent's Seminary at Latrobe, Pa. He joined the Carmelite Fathers when the pioneers of the order in this country came to America in 1859. He met them at Cumberland, Md., where they founded a monastery, now held by the Campellia Order.

He was ordained 53 years ago and celebrated his golden jubilee on April 23, 1923.

After a brief sojourn at Holy Trinity, Father Fink served St. Patrick's parish at Niagara Falls, Ont., for 15 years.

He returned to Holy Trinity four years ago, assuming the present position. Father T. W. Becker, in his declining years.

Niagara Alumnus, Rev. W. C. Rourke, Dies in River

Pastor of Church at Scarsdale, N. Y., Victim of Heart Attack While in Swimming

Scarsdale, N. Y., Aug. 21.—The Rev. William C. Rourke, pastor of the Church of the Immaculate Heart of Mary here, died Sunday night of heart disease while swimming in the St. Lawrence River at Washington, N. Y. Father Rourke, who was 60 years old, had been a priest for 30 years, suffered an attack of heart disease almost as soon as he entered the water and was immediately pulled to shore by the Rev. Timothy E. Collins of Massena, N. Y., an old friend. He was already dead. Father Rourke had been spending a few days with Father Holland.

Father Rourke was born in Long Island City. He made his college course at Niagara University, graduating in 1895, and his summary course at St. Joseph's. He was ordained in 1901. When the Scarsdale parish was instituted in 1912, Father Rourke was named pastor. He celebrated Mass for a time in the village fire house. Now there is a fine new church, a modern parish school and a congregation of 2,500 persons, all of whom mourn the death of their pastor.

MOTHER MARY DEAD — Cincinnati, Aug. 21.—Mother Mary of St. Mark's, 44 years old, a member of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd for forty-two years and superior of Mount St. Mary's Training School for Girls, died here Monday of apoplexy.

Mother Mary also served for nine years as superior of the Good Shepherd home here. She supervised the remodeling and renovation of the old Mount St. Mary's Seminary.

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Reconstructing the Social Order

Death of a weekly series of articles on "Reconstructing the Social Order" by the Department of Social Studies (Catholic Workers' Column)

Washington, D. C., August 21.—Pope Pius XI's encyclical "Reconstructing the Social Order" aroused modern economists and says the individual competitive system and its successor, the system of economic domination and dictatorship, is being replaced by control of business, ownership in corporations and control of credit.

Free competition, "though within certain limits just and productive of good results" cannot be the principle of economic order, "the ruling principle of the economic world" and a selfish and "the economic system" which has recently taken its place and which is "a headstrong and violent power" and "needs to be curbed strongly and ruled with prudence (if it is to prove beneficial to mankind)." The "social" economic regime "with its world-wide diffusion of industry, has penetrated everywhere. It has invaded and perverted the economic and social spheres even of those who live outside its lair, influencing them, and, as it were, intimidating them by its advantages, its conveniences and its force."

Despotism, Domination — "In our days not alone in wealth accumulation, but in the economic sphere, despotism-economic domination is concentrated in the hands of a few, and those few frequently at the expense of but only the trustees and directors of invested funds, who administer them at their good pleasure. This power becomes particularly irresponsible when exercised by those who, because they hold and control money, are able also to govern credit and determine its allotment, for that reason applying so to speak the life-blood to the entire economic body, and grasping, as it were, in their hands the very soul of production, so that no one dare breathe against their will."

"This accumulation of power, the characteristic note of the modern economic order, is a natural result of limited free competition which permits the survival of those only who are the strongest, which, in other words, means those who fight most ruthlessly, who pay least heed to the dictates of conscience. This concentration of power has led to a threefold struggle for domination. First, there is the struggle for political power, the economic sphere itself, which forces battle to acquire control of the state, so that its resources and authority may be abused in the economic struggle. Finally, the clash between states themselves. While nations apply their power to the political influence, regarding the economic advantages, to promote the economic advantages of their citizens; and because, vice versa, economic forces and economic domination are used to decide political controversies between peoples."

Competition dead — "Free competition is dead, economic dictatorship has taken its place. Unbridled ambition for domination, and Mr. O'Brien, who was married the other day to Anna O'Brien, one of the best-loved church members in America. His father was a mining engineer for that vast, famous quarter of Irish immigrants, Flood, Fair, O'Brien & Mackay—the man who dug untold millions out of the great Comstock lode, and rose from poverty to enormous wealth. The baby was named, alas! O'Grady. He was a beloved child of Clarence H. Mackay, and grew to be a prominent lawyer in the city and state. But death never spares because of "prominence" or "wealth."

At 11 o'clock on the morning of the 21st, the body of the late Mr. O'Brien was taken to the funeral home of the late Mr. O'Brien, who was married the other day to Anna O'Brien, one of the best-loved church members in America. His father was a mining engineer for that vast, famous quarter of Irish immigrants, Flood, Fair, O'Brien & Mackay—the man who dug untold millions out of the great Comstock lode, and rose from poverty to enormous wealth. The baby was named, alas! O'Grady. He was a beloved child of Clarence H. Mackay, and grew to be a prominent lawyer in the city and state. But death never spares because of "prominence" or "wealth."

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The Godchild of Mrs. John Mackay, and Child of C. H. Mackay in Boyhood, Dies in West

San Francisco, Aug. 21.—Fifty-nine years ago a beautiful baby boy was baptized in the midst of the great West. His godmother was Mrs. John Mackay, mother of Clarence H. Mackay, who was married the other day to Anna O'Brien, one of the best-loved church members in America. His father was a mining engineer for that vast, famous quarter of Irish immigrants, Flood, Fair, O'Brien & Mackay—the man who dug untold millions out of the great Comstock lode, and rose from poverty to enormous wealth. The baby was named, alas! O'Grady. He was a beloved child of Clarence H. Mackay, and grew to be a prominent lawyer in the city and state. But death never spares because of "prominence" or "wealth."

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Ireland Honors Heroic Leaders in Dublin City

Mammoth Military Parade, Biggest Ever Staged by Free State, is Held in The Nation's Capitol

Dublin, Irish Free State, Aug. 21.—Thousands of persons lined Dublin's streets Sunday and witnessed a big military parade which was part of the annual ceremonies in honor of the dead Irish leaders, Arthur Griffith, Michael Collins and Eoin O'Duffy.

The military display in the parade was the most impressive ever staged by Irish Free State authorities. There were several batteries of heavy guns, drawn by six teams apiece, as well as field artillery, telephone sections and strong bodies of infantry and cavalry. Battalions of police also marched.

President Cosgrave of the Free State placed a wreath at the foot of the cenotaph. All youth buildings and garbions blazed in new their flags at half-staff, and prayers were offered in all churches for the dead leaders.

At 11 o'clock on the morning of the 21st, the body of the late Mr. O'Brien was taken to the funeral home of the late Mr. O'Brien, who was married the other day to Anna O'Brien, one of the best-loved church members in America. His father was a mining engineer for that vast, famous quarter of Irish immigrants, Flood, Fair, O'Brien & Mackay—the man who dug untold millions out of the great Comstock lode, and rose from poverty to enormous wealth. The baby was named, alas! O'Grady. He was a beloved child of Clarence H. Mackay, and grew to be a prominent lawyer in the city and state. But death never spares because of "prominence" or "wealth."

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