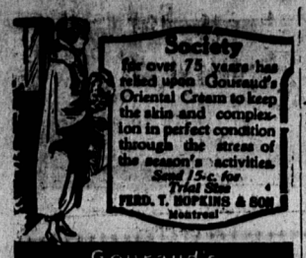

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The Wall Flower

(Continued from page 2.)

ly for a moment. "I feel as though the sun came out last winter for the first time, and began to warm me through. Before that, everything was dark and damp and chilly, and every face a threatening thunder cloud."

She went on.

"I don't know what I'd do without you. But George says you're apt to marry—I shouldn't go back to the old life. I'd get a position in the city—

"So George is having me married is he?" Gloria was quick to resent.

"In view of everything that's happened, he's a little quick with his judgment. But even if I should, Pan, and I don't intend to now. I'll tell you that—even if I should, you must stay with me. If you need me for my mental stimulation, I need you for the physical comfort you give me and my home and the care you take of Frank, who adores you and for the mass of details and worry you save me."

That was Pan's reward and all the reward she wanted.

That was her niche in life, to serve others. And she had found it with Gloria, she was satisfied—or thought she was. She wanted Gloria happy—even if she married George—

PARIS.
Chapter 77.

For the next several days, Pan had little time to worry over herself or Gloria either. Gloria kept them all too busy.

Though George had plenty of things to keep him in London, he dropped them and followed Gloria to Paris. To Pan, this was proof positive that he was in love.

George was different too. Most of his cynicism was gone, the little expression of amused doubt and distrust that was so characteristic of his face in the early days of the Winter, was almost entirely absent. George, when he looked at Gloria, showed nothing but affection and pity.

They struck a cold wind on the Channel and a rough choppy sea. The train people, who had started off so gaily on a delightful morning, became transformed suddenl into pale, bedraggled looking tourists who huddled under rugs whenever the deck afforded shelter who lay back in limp attitudes and seemed the last word in misery.

Even Pan, who had not a touch of sea sickness on the ocean, retired to the women's lounge at George's suggestion, where she lay on a cretonne couch and stared unhappily at a port hole above her head, whose gay curtain flapped outwards and dropped back again, with every sidewise rolling of the boat.

"George says the seventh wave is always the worst," Frankie reported coming in to see how she was doing. "We went over a big one that time. It's just like being in the road-mending machine, isn't it, and going over big lumps in the road?"

Pan didn't dare answer. She managed to nod and lay still, thinking how useless she was to the world in general and Gloria in particular, and wondering whether she would ever be the same again.

Just when her misery was most acute, the water became calm. They were entering the breakwater at Calais. And the misery departed as suddenly and inexplicably as it had come, and she sat up, feeling very foolish and very much ashamed. Other passengers were doing the same, past unhappiness still in their glazed eyes.

"Your hair looks funny," Frankie observed. "Come along, we're there."

And just as instantly as they had become limp wrecks, the various passengers began to smile and revive, and when they were through the customs, they went chattering into the station restaurant and ordered luncheon and wine.

"I never thought I'd want anything to eat again," Pan remarked as she ate omelette and asparagus.

"Yes, it's the worst thing in the world, it's more acute than a toothache or a broken heart," Gloria said lightly. "It's worst of all because it has no element of tragedy. It's only a joke, but dreadful while it lasts."

In Paris, Gloria had one of her sudden attacks of economy and put them in a tiny hotel—one, it happened, where she knew the proprietress, a chubby old lady who welcomed Gloria as a daughter and Frankie as a lost grandchild, telling him in voluble French that she last saw him in his mother's arms. She would be delighted to look after him while the ladies shopped.

So, sometimes with Gloria who was now earnestly buying furniture and hangings and embroideries, and sometimes with Frankie, Pan explored Paris. She would, as is the sad fate of so many many Americans in reaching that city of varied delights, that her school French was perfectly useless. She could not even understand the chubby Madame Rollande when that lady spoke very slowly. As for the conversation on the streets, it was a mad jumble of syllables.

"Your mother knows what they're saying, though," she observed sadly to Frankie, after asking a policeman the way to their hotel and not knowing a word of his answer.

"Oh, yes," said Frankie cheerfully. "Mother knows every language, I suppose."

He believed it. For Gloria, if she was a bad mother according to Norris City standards, had accomplished one thing which few mothers achieve, and the Norris City

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type of mothers never at all—she had made herself a great heroine in the eyes of her small son. Gloria was the most lovable, fascinating, amusing and dazzling of personages to the child—a feeling he was to carry all through his life.

Together the girl and the child explored the Louvre, seeing that most amazing collection of old masters there, Pan still too ignorant to know the very good from the mediocre, but standing in religious awe before some masterpiece of Leonardo or Raphael, and not knowing how the mood of worship came over her. Together they wandered the streets, climbed the Eiffel Tower in the series of elevators—this to Frankie's in tense delight,—journeyed to the palace of Versailles, where Pan read Frankie stories of Louis the XIV to improve his mind—walked often to the Arc de Triomphe where they could see almost the whole city from its radiating avenues, and rested when exhausted, at the Bois de Boulonge where Frankie played in the woods and Pan sat quietly and read. In the evenings, with George and Gloria she dined and went to plays and the opera, and home exhausted, to sleep as soon as she touched the pillow. Gloria gave them no time to be unhappy.

A RETURN.
Chapter 78.

The Paris days grew more and more hectic.

Gloria had more friends here than in London, and more demands upon her time as a result.

"I feel as though we were home again, with these afternoon tea parties happening," Pan remarked happily when Gloria came in one day and announced that several visitors would shortly appear.

"Tea isn't the ceremony here it is in England, or the sort of thing I make of it at home," Gloria explained, slipping out of her suit and hunting for a cool and appropriate gown. "The French idea is that it spoils dinner, and they build up their day to a proper appreciation of the meal."

"But I can't take food so seriously. Pan, if you tell Madame Rollande I asked it, she'll send you a huge white cloth to cover some of the gilt of that table. The darling gives me her best, but her best means too many curlicues.

Pan did as she was asked, put out of sight most of the ornaments and a green plush cover that gave Gloria a headache, and even managed to go into the kitchen and make the tea—for the hotel was small and Madame adored her American guest.

And Gloria was almost hysterically gay at her party, as she poured tea and dispensed little cakes, showed off Frankie and introduced Pan as her protegee.

"Though whether I look after her or she looks after me I can't say," Gloria said. "Donald look at the fine shape of her head. Wouldn't you like to model that?" A caressing hand touched Pan's hair lightly. Pan smiled, used to being discussed in the third person. Donald was a sculptor studying in Paris; there was an elderly lady who was addressed as duchess, and who spoke only French, a middle-aged journalist, an English friend who happened to be staying in Paris, an Italian who spoke any language. George standing to one side at home with everyone and Gloria a gay centre of an odd group.

"How strange that I should be here Pan said after they had gone. "I don't belong here, but they don't know that. They were nice to me because you put me here. They didn't know I came from Norris City and am nobody at all."

"Don't go back to your feeling of inferiority," Gloria warned. She looked ten years older suddenly, the gaiety had gone with the last guest.

"No, I'm not. I was only thinking—none of these friends of yours would bother with me, except that I live with you and am your friend. There is nothing in me to attract—"

"My type attracts some people, yours others," Gloria answered practically. "I have dash and initiative, perhaps, you have an enduring sweetness." Silence then

"I should lecture you about feeling inferior. I feel it myself at times—now, for instance. These people you admire so—that French duchess is a hard and unscrupulous as a woman can be, she come because I amuse her. The res come to meet her, she's a big social light. I don't care a snap about any of them—anything—"

This was childish for Gloria! Pan sat and felt miserable.

"If only you'd cabled Santley before you sailed," she said finally. "It would have been all right then. He didn't hear and went out of town and then didn't get your wire when we landed."

"Do you think a cable would have made a difference?" Gloria asked. "No, it's plain enough. He may not be interested in this other girl, but he certainly got over his fancy for me. He may only have been in love because he couldn't marry me, and because he was sorry for me.

"There's nothing to be sorry for now. I'm free. I've a business that makes me independent. I'm settled where I've lots of friends. And think of the time—it's been years—"

"Not so many if he really cared," Pan argued. "Didn't he write so you could tell how he felt?"

"Oh yes, of course. And said he was going to follow me to New York. But his future was in London, I knew that—and I couldn't go back with Frank living there. And I couldn't let him waste his time over a married woman. So I made his stay away and made him write just friendly letters. They were always affectionate, good Lord, I've lived on those letters for years—"

"I wish you would marry," Pan said. "You may like your independence but you are killing yourself the way you live now, you work too much and you play too much."

"If I didn't work I'd die of starvation and if I didn't play I'd die of boredom." Gloria answered. "I don't want to marry, not even a Santley." Pan knew better than this. "We're going back to London Friday, and we'll be there several weeks before we go home. Santley will likly appear,, and I'll be nice and friendly so he'll know that I haven't had any but impersonal ideas about him for years."

She began to dress for dinner. Pan looked at the thin, nervous face, white against the rose of her dress, and guessed the agony of mind that made her mouth set so tightly. She wished she could do something. She felt she would be glad if only Gloria would marry George, her own feelings would not matter. But perhaps Santley would come, and perhaps it would be different in London.

Chapter 79.

Pan began packing trunks again—this time full of fascinating new dresses that Gloria had somehow found time to select, and a few modest simple frocks which Pan herself had bought.

"I never thought I'd own a real Paris dress," she said once to Gloria, as she held shook out a flowered silk possessing the most absurd of chiffon and lace aprons, with equally absurd ribbons that formed straps over the shoulders. She looked 16 and altogether charming in it, and Gloria had insisted upon its purchase.

"French clothes are really only for certain types of women," Gloria answered. "I wish more women knew that. You've been well enough trained by me now to buy yourself only the quiet, demure things that suit you—look how ridiculous I am in this."

And she slipped the frock over her head and fastened it. They laughed at the result—Gloria with her vividness and dash was awkward and out of place in Pan's dress, as Pan would have been in one of Gloria's bizarre tea gowns. Gloria's frocks were much remade for Pan!

They went back to London. George refused to go until he had finished his work in Paris.

And Pan, much as she liked the city of wonderful boulevards with its blue sky and hot sunlight on marble buildings, its fascinating shops and light hearted atmosphere, was glad to be where she could understand the language.

They had the same suite of rooms in the same hotel, and Pan, with the aid of her map, had no further trouble in finding her way about.

"It's like coming home," she said, and smiled ccheerfully out of the window at the rain.

Her companion shivered a little and said nothing.

For two or three days Gloria worked hard, and was almost too tired to go out at night. She was the sort that made friends everywhere; she had come knowing only one or two people in London, now they and their friends in an always increasing circle, deluged her with invitations.

Then Pan discovered one thing. Gloria's intense entnusiasm, her extreme vivacity, her occasional recklessness of speech, sometimes amused and sometimes shocked the real English with their great reserve and quietness. Gloria belonged to a cosmopolitan group.

"I nearly made that poor old dear with the sweet voice faint by my antics," Gloria observed after some tea guests had gone," I walked over every prejudice she had, I'm afraid, particularly when I talked about Ireland."

"You've lived over too much of the world," Pan answered. "You can take a—well, a point of view made up of several points of view. That's what travel does, I suppose, that's what they mean when they say it broadens the mind."

Gloria smiled a little.

"Our darling friend was much more urgent in her invitation that you have luncheon at her house, than she was when she asked me. Go on, Pan, she'll like you, you are just as reserved, and just as dependable underneath," as the most British Britisher. I'll be unavoidably absent—I should go out of town anyway."

So Pan did go to luncheon with the English lady and her family, the first time since she had lived with Gloria that she went anywhere socially alone. She found that her enthusiasm about London pleased and flattered them, her desire to know more of the city provided ample conversation, her quietness appealed to their quietness.

Her visit was a success and did

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"Penner, Master Frankie is playing with the Nicholson's. Will you bring him here?"

The maid departed and returned with the child.

"Frankie remembered all about England, he told us so coming up in the train," Gloria announced. "Frankie, do you remember your old friend Mr. Collins?"

(To Be Continued)

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