

HAPPY HOUSE

By Jane D. Abbott

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A wistful gleam in Aunt Milly's eyes made Nancy lean over and kiss her again. At that moment the door opened and Aunt Sabrina walked in. Then it seemed to Nancy as though a shadow crossed Miss Milly's face. The glow in her eyes died completely. She seemed to shrink back among the cushions.

"Oh, you have met our niece," Aunt Sabrina said in her cold voice and with no curiosity as to how it had happened.

Nancy looked at Aunt Milly and Aunt Sabrina's glance seemed to say: "Please don't tell her I peeked through the blinds." Aloud she answered meekly: "I told her we were glad she had come!"

Aunt Sabrina nodded as though to approve such action. Her eyes turned around the room.

"Is there anything you want done? B'indy's washed the other covers for your cushions, but they aren't dry enough to iron. The color didn't run a bit—they'll be more sensible than those white ones, for they won't be needing washing all the time, and B'indy has enough to do!"

"Oh, yes, they'll be more sensible," Miss Milly agreed wearily. "No, I don't want anything."

There were two or three moments of silence. Aunt Sabrina went about the room straightening a picture here, a "tidy" there. Nancy watched her with angry eyes—what was there about her that had killed that precious glow in poor little Miss Milly?

She rose abruptly. "May I go to my room? I want to write a letter," Miss Sabrina said. "Why, of course, Anne," and Miss Milly flashed a little ghost of a smile that entreated: "You see what life is like for me, so please, please come again."

Upon Nancy's face, as she closed her own door behind her, was a mixture of relief, indignation and apprehension. And a little of each of these emotions crept into the lines of the letter that—to give vent to all that was bursting within her—she dashed off to Claire.

"You'd just better believe that if I had that precious darling, Anne Leavitt, back in our beloved tower room I'd tell her that all the fortunes in the world and all the suffering Russians wouldn't hire me to spend one more day with her 'family.'"

"And yet, Claire, darling, it's so dreadful that it's funny. I just wonder that I haven't been scared pink! Can you picture your little Nancy surrounded by mahogany, so old that it fairly screams at you, that it was brought over on the Mayflower and walls as high as the library tower (please abstract poetical license) and just odious of Leavitt traditions—though I'll admit, just being a plain human mortal, I don't know yet quite what the Leavitt traditions are, but believe me, I expect to, very soon, for Aunt Sabrina talks of nothing else!"

"Of course, sweet child, you can't make head or tail to all my jibberish, so I'll write lucid English now. The island is wonderfully beautiful, everything about it seems different from any other part of the world—the trees are bigger and the grass is greener and every now and then you catch a glimpse of Lake Champlain as blue as Anne's sapphire ring and hazy purple mountains beyond. And the whole place is brimming with all kinds of historical stories.

"They call this house Happy House. It was named that by the first Anne Leavitt, and she had a mantel made in England with the letters carved on it, and the day after it was put up she died in the very room I'm writing in! Isn't that tragic and exciting? I can't make a story out of that, though, for it's been all written up in a book they sell at North Hero.

The house is big and built of stone that was quarried on the island, and it's all covered with vines and beautiful—outside. It has trees all around it that meet overhead like a canopy, and instead of a regular garden in beds the ground's all covered with tiger lilies and Sweet William and phlox and lots of flowers I don't know the name of, that look as though they'd spilled out over their gardens and grew everywhere. And there's a darling old

gardener who is a descendant of Ethan Allen.

"In fact, everyone I've seen is old and, Webb said, is descended from 'somebody or other.'"

"But the inside of the house—oh, horrors! I don't believe a ray of sunshine has gotten into it since the year one, and if it did, it would be shut out mighty fast. Dad would go wild with delight over the old furniture, and the dishes are beautiful, but the wallpaper looks like green lobsters crawling all around, and you walk on brown red roses as big as cabbages. Does it torture my artistic soul? Oh, ye gods! And my own room! No wonder that other Anne Leavitt died! I never saw so many tidies in my life—I shall never draw a happy breath among them. Oh, I can shut my eyes right now and see the dear old tower room—you sitting in the middle of the bed (unmade, of course), playing your uke, Anne digging at her French Four on the window seat along with the fudge dishes which I forgot to wash, and a week's muss all around us. Oh, Claire, weren't we happy, though? And to think it's all over."

"Aunt Sabrina is very handsome and very Leavitt. I think Anne, in her manner, when we've done something she doesn't approve of, is like her Aunt Sabrina. She's very tall and parts her hair straight in the middle and has the longest, straightest nose and a way of talking to you that makes you feel like an atom. B'indy, who is the woman-of-all-work around Happy House, but somebody, just you believe, is very much like Aunt Sabrina and looks at you as if she could see the littlest thought way back in your mind. And, of course, with me acting a part and feeling as guilty as can be, you can imagine that I don't enjoy B'indy's searching glance! However, I asked her some questions about the Leavitts and it warmed her up a little.

"But there is an Aunt Milly that Anne didn't seem to know about and, Claire, she is human—the dearest, sweetest, prettiest, timidest little thing. You can't tell, looking at her, whether she is old or not, but being my great aunt—or Anne's—I suppose she is. But she is an invalid and evidently can't walk. There's something about her that makes you feel dreadfully sorry for her and like taking care of her, and I sort of imagine that for some reason or other Aunt Sabrina treats her horribly. When Aunt Sabrina comes into the room, poor Aunt Milly acts scared to death.

"Just how I'll come out of it all I can't guess. I've got to keep my head and see the thing through for Anne's sake. But—so far—I don't like it a bit. It was easy enough planning it all with Anne back in college, but somehow, now that I'm here, I feel so underhanded, deceiving these people. And Miss Sabrina talks so much about the Leavitt honor that it makes me feel like 30 cents. There is a lot of mystery about the place, but I feel as though I had no right to try and find it out, though I'll admit I'm dreadfully curious. I rode over from North Hero with the funniest old man—his name is Webb and he said he was one of Freedom's 'first citizens.' Modest—yes. Well, with a very little encouragement he would have poured out the entire Leavitt history, only it didn't seem nice to let him talk. But he spoke about a 'Leavitt trouble,' and he said something about Miss Milly being 'happier in the grave.' Isn't that interesting? And the very strangest thing of all is that Aunt Sabrina has forbidden me to ever mention my father—or Anne's father and grandmother! Of course Anne will want to know all about it, and maybe it is my duty to find out why. Anyway, if the chance comes to me, well, I won't shut my ears.

"Speaking of Webb and riding over from North Hero, Claire, I did the most dreadful thing, and if I tell you, you must swear that you won't ever tell Anne, though goodness knows when either of us will see dear old Anne again. We'd driven along for miles and hadn't seen a soul—even the cows in the pastures weren't moving—when suddenly, around a corner, dashed a man on horseback. He went by us like a flash, but I could tell even with all the dust, that he rode well and was

very handsome and sort of different from—well, Webb, and the people you'd expect to see on North Hero Island. I was curious—you know, I always am—and I turned around. And what do you think he did—he wheeled that horse around and stopped dead still to stare at us, and caught me turning, of course, though I was just curious because he seemed different. And that isn't all—he had the nerve to wave his hand and here's the confession! I nodded back to him! I always am so impulsive and it seemed so good to see someone that was young. And he did have the grandest eyes even through the dust. But here's the worst—I asked Webb who he was, and Webb said he was 'Judson's hired man!' Oh, Claire, what would Anne have said!

"Well, of course, the fellow had his nerve, and if I ever see him again I shall show him his place and make him understand that I am a dignified, unapproachable young person.

"Oh, Claire, dearest, I wish I was with you at Merrycliffe. You don't know how lucky you are to have a jolly home and a jolly mother who knows how to love! That's the trouble here—they act as though it was a crime to show a spark of affection. Aunt Milly comes the nearest to it, but I don't believe the others know what love is.

"Write to me often, for it will help keep up my courage, and I will keep you posted as to all that happens to poor me—especially about the hired man. I can't wait to see him.

"Once your happy and now your perfectly miserable used-to-be Nancy.

"To be known for the present as,

"Anne Leavitt."

CHAPTER V.

Bird's Nest.

"Joshua Leavitt was Justin's son and he married Abigail Clark over at Isle Le Motte, and they had three sons, Joshua and John and Jacob, all upright, settled young men. Let me see, it was either John or Jacob was killed in the war of 1812, wasn't it, B'indy?"

Nancy's mind was working faster than the knitting needles in her fingers. For three days now she had sat very close to Aunt Sabrina, learning "all about the Leavitts."

"It's lucky I have a good head for history," she said to herself, nodding to show Aunt Sabrina that she was deeply interested in these Joshuas and Johns and Jacobs. "If I'm here long enough she may get down to the present generation! Joshua—John—Jacob," she repeated softly.

"Dear me, where is B'indy? My memory isn't as good as it used to be. I'm growing to be an old woman. But the Bible in there tells how either John or Jacob fell at Fort Niagara. The Leavitts have always been brave men—and men of honor!"

At this point Nancy, quite involuntarily, dropped a stitch. The sudden color that flushed her cheeks escaped Aunt Sabrina's notice, for B'indy's voice came suddenly through the open door.

"Miss Sabrina, if Jon'than don't get that cornstarch from Eaton's there won't be no cornstarch puddin' for dinner. He's worse than no good round the house and a body takes more steps huntin' him than doin' all his chores for him!"

Nancy sprang to her feet. "Oh, please let me find him! I—I'd love to walk around a bit, too. I'll speak very sternly, B'indy—you just see if he doesn't go at once!" Tossing her red wool into the cushion of the old rocker she had been occupying, Nancy was off before the astonished B'indy or Aunt Sabrina could utter a protest.

She found Jonathan at his everlasting digging. Nancy shook him playfully by the arm. Jonathan could not guess that her eyes were bright because, for a few moments at least, she had escaped from the oppressiveness of Aunt Sabrina and her ancestors; his old heart warmed to her infectious smile.

"B'indy's as cross as can be! She must have the cornstarch at once! I hate cornstarch pudding worse than poison, but you must hurry as fast as you can, and please go by the lilac side of the house, because Miss Sabrina is sitting over on the hollyhock porch talking ancestors and I want her to think that it's taking me forever to find you!"

"Cornstarch! Bless my boots!" A hundred wrinkles crossed the weather-beaten old

face. "I'll go off to Eaton's fast's ever I can, Missy."

"Nice Jonathan," and picking a posy, Nancy stuck it into the buttonhole of the gardener's sweater. "And I'm going fast's ever I can, straight out to the lake."

With a wave of her hand she flew down the path through the row of old apple trees. She wanted to shout and to sing, but as that might startle the entire island, she indulged in a joyous handspring instead!

"Of course, Anne, darling, if you could see me you'd look shocked—you'd say, 'Nancy Leavitt, when are you going to grow up!' But Annie if growing up and up and up is going to be to grow like you Aunt Sabrina, sitting all the day long dwelling on the glories that are past and gone—never—never—never!" The girl flung her arms out toward the blue waters of the lake. "If I had a wish I'd wish that I could swim straight out across you—to those purple mountains—over there!"

It was very still in the orchard; cool, too, for the hot June sun only penetrated in spots the outspreading branches of the old trees. Gradually the tumult of longing in Nancy's mind quieted; a sense of delicious quiet inspired her.

"It's heavenly here—just as though I was all alone in the world." She turned slowly around. Not a glimpse of any habitation could be seen, the rows of trees hid even Happy House. And beyond was the stretch of sparkling water, with its rim of hazy, purple hills.

Nancy ran to the apple tree nearest the cliff. It was very old, its branches grew close to the ground. In a moment she had climbed them and had perched herself comfortably upon one with her back resting against another.

"It must be nice to be a bird," she mused, touching lightly the glossy leaves about her. "Playing in tree tops and when you're bored to death, simply flying off without as much as an excuse! Or a wood-nymph," wistfully. Then her drooping shoulder suddenly straightened, under the stimulation of an idea. She sprang to the ground. "Oh, rapture!" she cried, and raced back toward Happy House.

Half an hour later Jonathan, having made peace with B'indy, found her in the old carriage house. Two shiny nails protruding from her teeth and a hammer in her hands betrayed that she had found his tool box. Her face, through smudges of dust, wore a look of determination.

"You've come just in time to help me, Jonathan. I must get the top of this box off and fasten it to that box—so it'll open and shut. Then you must find a piece of leather for hinges and some oil cloth. I think that you have everything on earth hidden in this place—except carriages!"

Because, with Jonathan, it had been love at first sight, he obeyed with only a "well, well, Missy." With the boards of one box made a snug door for the other box and he found, hidden away, some precious leather that could be cut into strips for hinges, and a square of oil cloth and canvas, too. There were more nails in the tool box, and though old Jonathan guarded that tool-box like a treasure chest, he'd give Nancy anything it held!

They labored feverishly and within an hour Nancy declared their work done.

"Now come with me, Jonathan, and I'll show you my secret." She lifted the box and started toward the orchard, Jonathan trudging after her.

When they reached the last tree near the cliff Nancy set her burden down. She turned to her companion with a solemn face.

"Jonathan, no one is going to know this secret but you and me! I am a dramatist. You don't look as though you knew what that was, but it is something that it's very, very hard to be, and I shall have to work—like everything! Right up on the branch of that tree is where I'm going to work. I want you to take those nails I put in your pocket and fasten this box securely to the trunk of the tree. Then I'm going to keep all my things right in it and fasten it with this padlock I—borrowed—from your tool box. It'll be just like a nest—and I'll steal out here and work and and then, some day, when I'm famous, all the newspapers will print a story telling how I wrote my first play in an apple tree and that it was a secret between you and me, and they'll want your picture! Now, right here, Jonathan. I'll hold it and you nail it tight."

(Continued next week.)



BLANCHE BLAIR

REGINA MCCABE and RICHARD LEARY

THAT Tanlac is a wonderful medicine for delicate children is conclusively proven by the remarkable results accomplished in the cases of the three children shown in this picture.

Little Blanche Blair, of Providence, R. I., age 13, gained 10 pounds; Regina McCabe, at right, age 9, of Scranton, Pa., gained 15 pounds; little Richard Leary, Jr., of Philadelphia, who was very delicate, is now in fine, robust health. The statements made by their parents are as follows:

Mr. A. M. Blair, residing at 20 Atwood street, Providence, R. I., said: "We are just so happy over the change Tanlac has made in our little girl that we can't do or say enough to show our appreciation. She had lost nearly 20 pounds in weight and looked so frail and weak that her mother and I were both almost worried sick over her condition. Since taking Tanlac, she has already gained 10 pounds, her color is better than it ever has been and she looks and acts like a different girl."

Mrs. Catherine McCabe, 414 Dickens Ave., Scranton, Pa., said: "The 'flu' left my little Regina in such a bad condition that I have no idea she would be with me now if it hadn't been for Tanlac. It is a mystery to me how she lived on the little she was eating and was so lifeless she never even cared to play with the dolls and toys she got at Christmas. Since taking Tanlac she is as hardy and well as any child could be and has gained 15 pounds in weight. I will always praise Tanlac for restoring my little girl's health."

Richard Leary, 2342 Palothorpe St., Philadelphia, said: "There is no doubt in my mind but that Tanlac saved my little boy's life. For two years I wouldn't have been a bit surprised to have seen him drop off at any time. He had stomach trouble and many a time the gas pressed up into his chest until his heart palpitated so I thought sure he couldn't breathe but a few more gasps. But Tanlac gave him back to us strong and well and we will praise it to our dying day."

The effect of Tanlac on the delicate stomachs of the young is one of the strongest evidences of its wholesomeness as well as its unusual merit. Although a powerful reconstructive, Tanlac contains no harmful ingredients, minerals or opiates which are so often found in other medicines. Being composed of the most beneficial roots and herbs known to science it is purely vegetable and can be taken by the most delicate children, and does not upset or injure the weakest or most delicate stomach.

There is a Tanlac agent in every town.—Advertisement.

Cities as Thunderstorm Spots.
The conclusion has been reached by a well-known engineer who has given the subject considerable attention that certain cities, if not indeed most inland cities of say 100,000 population or more, appear to be "thunderstorm spots." The observation has been made by E. E. Horton, of Voorheesville, N. Y., who also points out that "a shallow lake with sandy margins located in a forest may serve as a thunderstorm breeder" and cites as proof observations made by him over Oneida lake, New York.

Old Court Has Much Power.
In Liverpool (Eng.) there still exists one of the very few remaining medieval borough courts of record. At one time there were 215 in various parts of the kingdom. The Liverpool court of passage, as it is called, has practically unlimited jurisdiction in cases of action arising within the city, and has more power than has the City of London court which has jurisdiction only when the defendant is employed in the city itself.

Misery loves company, but the company isn't apt to make a second call.

Nature's Supreme Wisdom.
If it were not for the check that winter interposes, vegetation would climb skyward until we had tropical jungles and flowers high in the branches of the forest, instead of violets and daisies and lady's-slipper orchids. As it is, the year's tender growths decay in the wet and cold of winter, furnish shelter to the seeds of grasses and small woodland plants, and so foster a new growth for the coming of spring. Even in decay there is a purpose; in nature always there is a new beginning.—Youth's Companion.

Jewish Physicians to Popes.
Many examples might be enumerated of popes who patronized Jewish physicians. An exception was Paul IV, who introduced the Ghetto into Rome, but at least a score of popes seem to have gone out of their way in extending friendly recognition to the medical members of this race.

The Alibi.
The Secretary—This speech may get you into trouble.

The Honorable—Then you had better prepare a statement saying that I was misquoted by the newspaper.—Life.

A "balanced diet" may sound confusing to many people

The facts, as explained here, are simple.

The secret of a "balanced diet" is to have food containing all the elements needed for proper nutrition. These elements are protein, to nourish the tissues; starch and sugar to furnish energy; fat to supply heat; and mineral salts to provide the material necessary for building nerves, brain, and tooth and bone structure.

Grape-Nuts, the nourishing cereal made of whole wheat flour and malted barley, served with cream or milk, is a complete food for young and old alike.

Go to your grocer today and get a package of Grape-Nuts. Eat it with milk or cream for breakfast; or with stewed fruit, jelly or jam, as a delicious dessert for lunch or dinner.

Every member of the family will relish this palatable and nourishing food—

Grape-Nuts—the Body Builder
"There's a Reason"

Made by Postum Cereal Co., Inc., Battle Creek, Mich.