

Fine Italian Hand

By John Stuart

ALL ranks will hereafter refrain from alluding to our noble allies as, respectively, 'Limeys', 'Frogs' and 'Wops.'"

It was whispered in France during the last months of the war that an aide on the staff of General Pershing—an aide without a sense of humor—drew the above into terms of a general order and submitted it for the general's signature. The general, among other things, has an excellent sense of humor. So, for the most part, did our noble allies. The order never saw the light of day.

Many people in Hollywood will tell you that the three top directors are Italian: Borzage, La Cava and Capra. But when anyone in Hollywood says, "The Little Wop," anyone in Hollywood who hears it knows that that means Frank Capra. And nobody's offended, even the Italians. Certainly Capra isn't. He'd probably be very uncomfortable if anyone tried to link him up with the kind of imperial, orotund Latinity in which Mussolini and his more fiery followers specialize. For he was, and still largely is, just that—a little wop.

Some twenty years ago he got his first job in moving pictures. He was water boy, or something equally important on the old Christie lot. He had a bad pain in his stomach. He went to a doctor. The doctor said it was an acute appendix and it had to come out. The operation, he said, would cost twenty dollars. Frank had just two dollars in the world and there was not then twenty dollars amidst the whole numerous Capra family. His mother, practical Sicilian peasant, kept cold packs on him day and night. The inflammation subsided. Frank went back to work selling papers until he could get another job in moving pictures and the appendix didn't come out until last winter.

That same mother, whom Frank still adores, fluttered about in her simple, old-fashioned-Italian-lady best clothes, mistrusted hospitals and protested in her still broken English that she should be left to deal with the situation again. Instead, the biggest array of diagnosticians, consultants, surgeons and assistants that the fertile brain of a Hollywood studio head could think of gathered round a meager hundred and forty odd pounds of olive-skinned muscle and bone and snipped the offending vermiform.

Harry Cohn and Sam Briskin, heads of the Columbia studio in Hollywood, drove the staff half frantic with their telephone calls at five-minute intervals to know "How's he doin'?" Jack Cohn spent many times twenty dollars each day in long-distance calls from the Columbia offices in New York. Much of this arose out of affection for Frank. But a great deal, too, arose out of the fact that while his appendix was getting impossible Frank Capra was becoming one of the most valuable single individuals in this community of super-valuable individuals.

Frank Capra, who has been officially designated as the ace of all motion-picture directors, and who has a recipe for his many successes

Frank Capra recently won a gold statuette—the highest award a Hollywood director can receive. He had yearned for it for years and everyone in Hollywood agrees that he certainly earned it. Here's the reason for the award



Claudette Colbert, Clark Gable and Frank Capra on the set of "It Happened One Night"

His is not the value the press departments put out stories about. Glamour doesn't make Frank; Frank makes glamour; and the shrewd business heads of rival studios play close-to-the-bosom poker to get him, without revealing their offers unless they have to. For he not only makes glamour; he makes pictures that make money. Not only is he rated in the councils of the moguls as worth at least a half million dollars a year to any studio that gets him—and don't let the press departments tell you *any* star makes that—but this spring he was officially marked as the ace of all directors when the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences awarded him, for *It Happened One Night*, the gold statuette for the biggest directorial achievement of the past year.

In this vain and venomous village of troupers' temperaments these awards promote grand dispute. The other choices for the academy prizes—for the picture, the actor, the actress, the writer, the cameraman and so forth—were greeted as usual with that heartily nasty lack of unanimity which is always one of the merry features of the evening, and of many evenings throughout the year. But when they gave the director's prize to Capra, the temperaments boiled not in indignation but into an orgy of

(Continued on page 48)

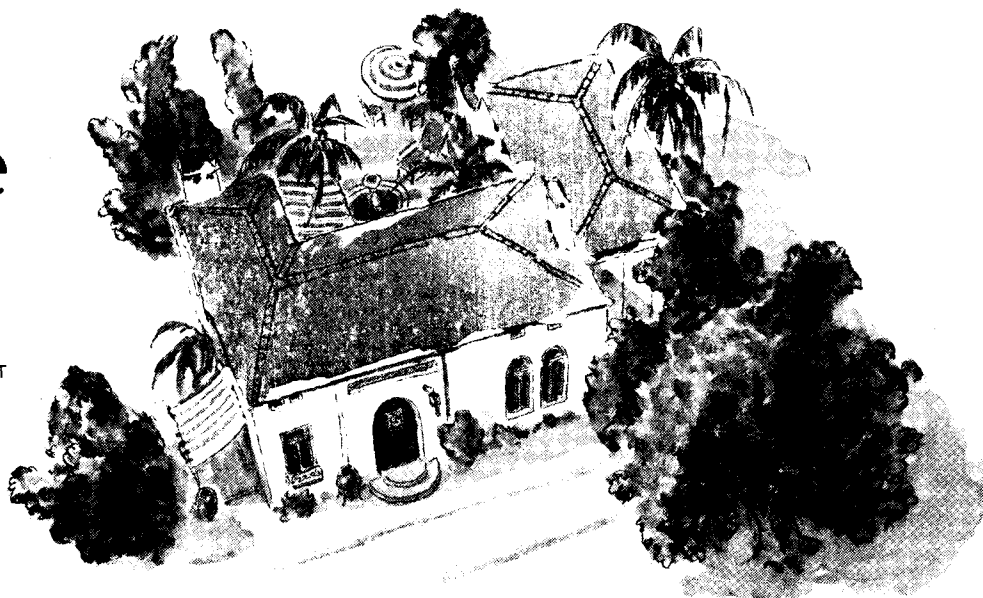


Secret Marriage

By Kathleen Norris

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The Story Thus Far:

LIVING comfortably in a California town, Mary Burleigh's mother dies, leaving an estate which is quite ample for the needs of her children: Mary, Peter, Barty, Chrissie and Lindsay. It is discovered, however, that a large amount in bonds is missing. Whereupon, Mary and Peter, the oldest members of the family, go to work—Mary finding employment in a bakery and Peter securing a job with a lumber company.

Within a few weeks, Mary meets an attractive young man, Calvin Tait, and, yielding to his pleas, marries him—*secretly*! Since her husband works in a Southern California bank, Mary sees him only occasionally. And presently she makes a shocking discovery: *She does not love Calvin!*

She does not love Calvin, her husband; but she does love Jeffery Maclean—and Jeffery Maclean (engaged to her best friend) loves her. Divorce, and another marriage? The idea does not appeal to Mary. And that problem is solved by Jeffery's departure for China, after he has broken his engagement and told Mary he will never forget her.

A short time after Jeffery goes away, Calvin is made a vice president of a near-by bank. He comes to Mary, tells her of his good fortune, suggests that, when his salary is a trifle larger, they announce their marriage. He is aware that his wife is interested in Jeffery Maclean—she has told him the whole story. Nevertheless, he is astounded when Mary shows no inclination whatever to step forth with him before the world as husband and wife.

Again and again, the two argue the matter. But Mary is adamant. She is fond of Calvin; she recognizes his good qualities. But she does not want to be his wife. And she tells him so, as gently and diplomatically as she can.

Called back to Southern California for two months, Calvin prepares to motor down. He implores Mary to accompany him. But, wise young man that he is, he does not insist. And he finally leaves alone.

As he drives away, Mary enters the house—the dilapidated structure where she and her sisters and brothers with old Aunt Joan now live—and tiptoes upstairs. Lindsay, her sister, is awaiting her. "Peter," Lindsay announces, "is afraid they're going to shut down the lumber yard." Mary asks a few hurried questions. Lindsay answers them. Then: "But if Peter loses his job, Mary," she says, "we can get along on your bakery money." And Mary, again confronted with a grave problem, wonders what miracle can save the little family.

VIII

IT'S lovely, Cal. Ah, that's cute! Oh, who but you ever would think of that?" Mary said. She went with him from room to room, there were but five in all, and exclaimed at everything and admired everything.

The days in Buena Vista Avenue were over now, for her at least. Aunt Joan and Peter, Lindsay and Chrissie and Bart still were there, clearing up inefficiently after an unsatisfactory lunch perhaps. Mary would be there no longer. This was her twenty-first birthday, this hot June day, and Cal had promised her a surprise for it. Without saying one word to her about it he had told them all, every one of them at home, and his office associates and his uncle and aunt, of his marriage to Mary a year earlier; that was all done, she need not dread breaking that news any more. He had given the story to the

papers; it would be in the afternoon edition. And he had finally taken Mary to lunch somewhat mysteriously; no, it was not to be at the hotel, nor at the club, nor at the Allied Arts in Menlo Park. It was up this street, down that one, past these cottages and gardens, and finally here—triumphantly!—to the prettiest of Spanish haciendas set in a little lawn under an oak, with its own small patio and with a tiled red roof and a fountain.

"This is our home, Mary!" he had said.

Inside were a drawing-room with windows upon the patio; and two bedrooms separated by a bath all green tiles and shining white enamel, a jewel of a kitchen super-equipped with an icebox and a cabinet and a shining new gas range, china closet, linen closet, deep bedroom closet with a pole for hangers and boxes for shoes. On either side of the drawing-room's big brick fireplace were bookshelves with books already arranged on them; the twin beds in the larger bedroom were made; the table in the breakfast ingie was set with a brown linen cloth and red and yellow plates, and Agnes, beaming with joy at seeing Mary again, was all ready to serve crab salad and broiled chicken and apple pie.

MARY found spices and vegetables in their places; some of the books were her own books; in the closet were her own gowns neatly ranged. It had been a joyous conspiracy, Calvin told her, on the part of her brothers and sisters and himself. They had exclaimed in complete stupefaction over the marriage, of course. Lindsay had burst out crying, Calvin reported, but she had cheered up again immediately, and she and Chris had come to some compromise regarding changed sleeping arrangements, and they had all agreed that it was an outrage that Mary should not have a chance to live her own life. Aunt Joan had been very serene, and though Peter and Bart had both looked a little blank at the idea of losing Mary, they had all been "sports," and had entered into the plan whole-heartedly.

While Mary, supposing that everyone had forgotten her birthday, had gone off as usual to Sorenson's bakery at noon, Calvin and the girls had smuggled away her books and clothes, and Calvin had promised to drive her about aimlessly until at least half past one o'clock, to give Agnes and Lindsay time to arrange them. The little green glass vase of roses was from Lindsay, and the standing lamp from Peter and Bart and Chris; Calvin and Mary were to dine with the senior Taites on Sunday night, and she could see the others as soon as she chose—tomorrow, any day and every day if she liked. Only she was Mrs. John Calvin Tait now, and they had taken possession of their new home, and that was that!

"Do you like it?" he asked, over and over. And every time Mary said: "It's wonderful—it's unbelievable! I don't see how you ever did it!"

Agnes went back to her own work after luncheon, and Mary and Calvin washed up the dishes and restored the doll's-house kitchen to its pristine beauty, and then she had to investigate every inch of her new domain at leisure. They had had so late a luncheon that the afternoon fled away on wings, and it was time to fuss with pretty supper preparations, praising Calvin all the time because he had remembered cream cheese and dates and mayonnaise, and there was really nothing to do!

It was restful after dinner to sit on in the patio watching the moon's mid-summer splendor rise and deepen over the slope of the roof and the great dark fountain that was the oak. Calvin turned on the radio and they listened to waltz music. Before they went to bed they walked about the block hand in hand, wondering about their neighbors and admiring this bungalow and that. Mary found the houses all less interesting than her own. "We have the pick, Cal," she said.

"I think we have!" Calvin agreed contentedly.

When he was asleep she lay awake and thought about it all, and her heart was lead within her. He was buying this house; it was to be home forever. Ah, if she could only love it as he did, rejoice in it as he did!

No use, no use, no use! Mary's whole spirit ached for her own people. She thought of Calvin telling them of their marriage; of the blank faces, the panic they must have felt upon hearing that their Mary—Mary, who planned everything and did everything for them, was going away forever. She thought of the moonlight lying white tonight over the shabby back yard and the oaks and acacias, and of the kitchen, darkened and warm and stuffy, and of the dishpan and the mismatched chairs, the playing cards and Rajah's cushion. And it seemed to her that she would die if she were to have to endure this exile long.

BARTY and Peter had looked a little blank, had they? Ah, well they might! Why, Peter felt lost if Mary was away even for a day; he had been worried when she stayed away over a single night. Now to hear, and from Calvin, that all this time Mary really had not belonged to them at all, that she had been married for a whole year, to hear—Calvin quite honestly believed it, of course—that she wanted to leave them, wanted to have a home of her own—why, it had broken their hearts!

And Lindsay had burst out crying. Mary writhed in the dark, thinking about it. She could not bear to imagine Lindsay crying, Lindsay wondering how

she was to meet all the difficulties of the days to come without Mary! Washing dish towels, buying cornstarch and onions and coffee, keeping the pantry neat and somehow getting the beds made! It was much too much for Lindsay; she could not possibly do it.

Mary's whole being burned with a fierce yearning over every one of them; every fiber of her was agonized by the need to go back, to belong there again, to be free.

IT WAS midnight before the sudden thought came to her: she could go down and see them all tomorrow! Ah, yes; she could do that! The hope spread balm upon her sore spirit; she could go early, have lunch with them—no, Calvin would expect her to be home for lunch. Well, then she could go immediately after lunch, talk to them all, cry and laugh and explain, have an arm about Lindsay again, kiss Barty's rough little head and catch the smell of sunburn and haycocks and earth that was small boy. She could buy something for their supper—a pie, or some fruit, and if there were dishes to wash or beds to make she and Lin could fly through them in the old way, laughing and chattering.

Dreaming of it, she fell asleep at last, and the plan was in her head when she awakened, and went crisp and fresh from a bath to the crisp, fresh little kitchen to start breakfast. The coffee-pot was green, there were green bowls, and green handles on the can opener and chopper and forks. Calvin liked iced tomato juice for breakfast in hot weather; Mary served it in an amber glass. Everything was colorful and shining this burning summer morning. Calvin reminded his wife that it was Friday. Tomorrow they could go over to Santa Cruz and swim and have a beach supper. And Sunday—ah, he had a swell plan for Sunday.

"What fun we're going to have, Pussy!" he said, handsome and fresh-shaven and happy, as she poured his coffee. "I've imagined you doing that for me a thousand times. It seems like a dream that we're really in our own home, alone together!"

"It seems like a dream to me," Mary agreed smilingly, "because I never saw so much as a teaspoon of it all before!"

"Ha, you have to admit I was smart about that!"

"Smart! I don't see how you ever did it."

"It was extremely simple as soon as I'd convinced your family that you wanted to live your own life."

Agony in her heart again, homesickness crushing her, sickening her.

"And convinced Uncle John," she suggested.

"Oh, well, he didn't matter! You see, Mary," Calvin said, still full of his surprise, "I knew I'd never get you away