



# ALABASTER LAMPS

By Margaret Turnbull.

There was nothing especially romantic to contemplate about Claude Melnotte Dabbs, village grocer, unless it were the first two-thirds of his name. When his dotting parents prefixed the cognomen of Bulwer Lytton's hero in the drama, "The Lady of Lyons," to his family name, it may have been an augury or at least an influence for C. M. Dabbs, while sticking to the hard facts of life and struggling success from his career as a tradesman, nevertheless had romantic yearnings—desire to see existence through "the mist of alabaster lamps."

And his dream came true. Yes, came true to the extent that C. M. participated in a romance in real life that had chivalry, adventure, mystery, beautiful women and all sorts of interesting and delightful people and experiences mixed up in it in about as satisfying proportions as anyone could wish. Right in a little town in Pennsylvania, with its typical and lovable characters, the local butler and egg man became the chief actor in a drama of life in which his humdrum affairs were tinged by that aura of enchantment existing in "perfumed light stealing through the mist of alabaster lamps."

Margaret Turnbull, author of this engaging story, was born in Scotland, educated in New Jersey and lives at Rockwood, New Hope, in Bucks county, Pennsylvania. She has written several successful novels. Her "Looking After Sandy" is still a popular favorite. Her play, "Classmates," was and still is a big success. She has done a number of moving pictures for the big producers. The story, "Alabaster Lamps," was written at Rockwood, on a hill above the Delaware river, far removed from the theaters, moving pictures or other accompaniments of city life; hence its peaceful atmosphere and fine strain of pure romance.

## THE STORY

**CHAPTER I**—With a stranger, whom he introduces as his nephew, Ned Carter, Claude Melnotte Dabbs returns from Peace Valley, Pa. to "Aunt Lydia," his housekeeper, and a chance acquaintance, veteran of the World War, whom he had met and taken a liking to.

**CHAPTER II**—Carter tells Aunt Lydia he has broken with his family and his sweetheart because of his principles. With Dabbs Ned visits the grocer. They almost run over a dog belonging to a girl whom Carter apparently recognizes as a delivery girl. Carter, in his absence the girl, Dorothy Selden, who knows him to be Ned Carter Rangleley, son of Loren Rangleley, New York banker.

**CHAPTER III**—Next day Ned comes work as a "grocer's boy." At a residence, the "White House," he delivers an order marked "Johnston." He and her mother, who tells him about the "house," are alone in the house, the servants having left them because of the "house." He promises to try to procure household help. Meeting Dorothy Selden, his erstwhile sweetheart, he baffles her attempts to discover the reason for his presence in Peace Valley. Arrangement is made for a cook to go to the Johnstons.

**CHAPTER IV**—The cook being unable to begin work at once, Ned visits the White House to inform Miss Johnston of the fact. Explaining the situation to her mother, the girl, "Mary," is astonished by that lady's emotion at the mention of Dorothy. The cook arrives, and Mary, with Ned, goes to the village for groceries. They are there by Dorothy Selden. They are seen by Dorothy, who warns her that she is something suspicious about Ned Carter.

**CHAPTER V**—There is something about Mary vaguely familiar to Dabbs and he is highly interested in village gossip concerning the mother and daughter. Mrs. Johnston accompanies Mary to an inn for lunch. Dabbs sees Mrs. Johnston and is obviously perturbed. He informs Ned he has something on his mind that he would like to tell him.

**CHAPTER VI**—Claude reveals to Ned a romance of his early life. He had married, while at college, and under peculiar circumstances, and his wife left him the day after the ceremony. He is convinced "Mrs. Johnston" is his wife, "Polly," and naturally wants to know who is Mary?

**CHAPTER VII**—Mrs. Johnston tells Mary they are practically penniless, through a trustee's default. She plans an appeal to Loren Rangleley, New York banker, and Mary, who is disheartened, and with Ned, Mary falls into a pool. Ned gets her out, and the incident reveals to him the real nature of his feelings toward the girl.

She told Claude of her plans. She meant to travel and study and see everything. She was fond of reading. Indeed, she had read and planned in a way that seemed remarkable to him for a girl, a servant girl, too, but he noted that she did not ask about his plans. Every time their conversation touched his life, present or future, she changed the subject. Then he knew that she meant him to understand she would have nothing to do with him after tonight. After tonight, Claude would not see her; after tonight she would be away enjoying things, out in the freedom of the world, with money, and she would have no use for him, no use at all. It had eaten into the young Claude's consciousness that she was going to use him as a shield until she met some one she really cared for. Then she would drop him, and his name, "After tonight" echoed and re-echoed in his mind, and he forgot that he had no right to expect anything else, for he had taken her money. Jealousy gradually took possession of him. He watched her talk and smile. It struck him. His train had gone.

He did not go; merely sat watching her. He had known, even then, that she was what she had done to him, and it had gone to her head. He had been one of the "boarders" in the old days, one for whom she must fetch and carry. Now he was at her mercy. He began to think of lots of things that proved she had not been indifferent to him in those old boarding house days as she had pretended. Even before the money came, Polly

moved the cigarette from between his lips. Claude noted idly that it was not lit. He glanced at the wall above Ned's desk. A small photograph in an old-fashioned frame hung above it. It was that of a lovely young country girl, with character behind the young loveliness. She was Claude's mother. "You see, Ned, I'd always been queer about girls. I liked 'em, but expected a good deal of 'em. Not every girl pleased me. Sounds conceited, but I don't mean it that way. It wasn't that—it was Mom."

His eyes turned again to the photograph. "It's one of those things you can't find words for. It's a feeling. Anyway, Mom gave it to me about girls, and Polly was the last. I felt that if we were careful enough about explaining our marriage to Mom she would understand and be pleased. But she never knew."

"Nobody'll ever know how wonderful life was to me that morning. I hadn't forgotten Pop, but since I'd told Polly just how I felt about him, and she'd tried to comfort me, I could bear it easier, because Polly understood. I forgot all about her money. It never entered my head. I only thought of Polly. When I was going out, she kissed me and said: 'Claude Melnotte, it's your home lit by alabaster lamps?'"

"I thought she was just fooling about my silly name. She'd read the play, you see. I hadn't, then. I just told her they were Rochester lamps. When I thought about it, as I turned back toward the hotel, I wondered if there was more to her question than just lamps—something behind it. I thought she might have been turning over in her mind whether she'd live with Mom, or insist on having a separate house for just us two. I didn't care. She could have her own way about that—and most everything else, too. But I've read the play since, and I'm pretty sure that there was a catch in it. Her question, I mean. It's the house he's blowing about in the house he's gonna take her to. All lies!"

"She wasn't down in the dining room when I came back from the walk, but she'd told me to give her plenty of time to pack, so I went up to her room. She wasn't there, and her trunk was gone. I went to inquire at the desk. They said the bill had been paid and Polly had gone, bag and baggage, to the station, half an hour after I left."

Claude paused, knocked the ashes from his cigar, and without looking up, went on happily: "I'm not asking for sympathy. The girl served me right, and I know it as well as you do. I've told you this, Ned—and you're the only one I have told—because I want you to know the worst of me."

"Polly knew blame well I couldn't follow her, seeing she had money and I had none. Her lawyer, all these years, has refused to give me any cash. But she's never divorced me. Unless I'm much mistaken, the Mrs. Johnston who is up at the White House is Polly, and what I want to know is who is Miss Johnston?"

A little sound, like a sigh, came from Ned and he turned gently on his pillow, and then silence.

Claude jumped to his feet and went noiselessly over to the bed. Ned was sleeping as quietly as a child.

Claude took the cold, unlighted cigarette from between Ned's fingers and looked at him with affection.

"Forty-seven years old, and I don't have sense enough to know or remember that?"

## CHAPTER VII

Mrs. Johnston, having something rather disagreeable to tell Mary, kept putting off the evil day and hour. Sooner or later it must be told, but Polly Johnston, though by no means a fool, was of a singularly sanguine temperament. She still hoped that later fortune might intervene in some miraculous manner and save her the trouble and necessity of telling. If not, it would have to be done, but not this day, if she could help it. Having come to that decision, it behooved her to keep away from Mary.

She had refused to go out, pleading a headache, thus removing herself from Mary's presence and scrutiny.

When the girl presented herself, fresh, smiling, and ready for morning, she found her mother lying down. She did not see the novel that her mother had poked under her pillow when she heard Mary coming. Explanations were made, received, and then came silence.

Mrs. Johnston wriggled herself into a more comfortable position, and the novel fell on the floor. Mary restored it to the couch. Mother never read when she had a real headache. The situation became tense.

"Come, Mother," coaxed Mary, "what's up? You've been grumbling sweetly for several days, you know. I've got to know sooner or later, so let it be now."

Mrs. Johnston sighed, made a swift mental calculation that she had better tell the most obvious first, and began:

"I can't keep it from you forever, but I did want to keep it just a little longer. However, here it is, Mary. You haven't heard of it, but I do. And the dividends on the stock, payable this month, just aren't going to be paid."

Mary gave a little gasp of astonishment and sat down on the floor by the couch. "Do you mean, Mother, that we're just faced with a period of do-or-die pressed finances and will have to tide over things until the first of next month, when you'll get something from somewhere? Tell me the whole thing. The very worst."

Mrs. Johnston saw instantly how useless it was to keep anything back from Mary. "It means the very worst you can think. I drew the last money I had in the bank to come down here. I expected, of course, to have Colonel Rittenhauser send me enough money to carry me along for another three months."

"Well, my dear, he's been speculating with all available money and securities. He lost mine along with those belonging to other people, and he's in jail."

"The rest of my money is tied up in stocks that aren't paying dividends, that is, all except the money invested by my uncle in Russian securities, which are now worth nothing. There's some land here, in this country, but I can't raise money on it at a moment's notice."

"Poor old mother! Have you any cash at all?"

Mrs. Johnston laughed. "About thirty dollars left. I said I'd sent for servants, but I haven't. However, I have interviewed Mrs. Pulsifer on the subject of coming here and closing up the house in case I have to go to New York suddenly, so that's that. I think I'll have to go there soon. It'll be a lot harder for you, Mary, than for me. Just now you ought to have everything."

"Poor!" said Mary. "Wait till you see me suffer! Honestly, Mother, I can't realize it. We've never had to speak of money like this before. Why, we've always had it."

"You always had it," Mrs. Johnston answered, "but there was a time when I had none."

Mary was amazed. "You never told me that. Not me, but not now. We'll just have to be practical, Mother. What can we sell, and how shall we go about it?" She considered for a long moment, while her mother watched her. "Bring out your jewelry. Mother, and I'll bring out mine. Rent must be paid, you know. We can do without servants."

Mrs. Johnston put her hand on her daughter's arm as Mary rose from the floor. "Don't dear, I can go to New York and borrow money on the land, I'm sure. I was making up my mind to that when you came in."

Mary turned away and looked down. All the excitement had gone out of her face. It was pale when she turned back to her mother.

"Mother! You were going to Loren Rangleley! Promise me you won't."

"Mary Johnston!"

"Don't you think I know? I've

known right along that that pale, cold, bloodless—yes, I know he's a great banker, but he looks like a money-lender. I know he wants to marry you. Oh Mother! If you go to him, he'll ask you, and if you do, just to be comfortable, I'll never forgive you. I'd rather work for you myself, all the days of my life!"

"Mary!" Mrs. Johnston sat up against her pillows and regarded her daughter as though she were a stranger. "I didn't know you felt so strongly, or that Mr. Rangleley's motives were so evident. Don't worry. When I hear I'm practically penniless, I won't seem so desirable in his eyes. Mary, stop crying. I never knew anything so—so silly."

"It isn't silly, not so very," Mary sniffed, trying to regain her self-control. "I've hated him good and hard for years, and I just loathe seeing him with you."

Her mother patted Mary's shoulder. "I only thought of him—for your sake."

"You'd lose me," Mary told her firmly. "I'd go and work anywhere first—except in Dabbs' grocery store."

Her mother started. "There won't be any question of that. Mother, there's the car. Send that boy away, Mary."

"Wouldn't it do you good to go out?"

"No it wouldn't. Leave me alone with my thoughts and my novel. I want to go over everything by myself, anyway. We'll tackle the jewel problem tonight. I've had my think."

"Then I might as well motor," said Mary.

Mrs. Johnston frowned.

"I don't like it. But go and ride with your idealized grocer's clerk, if you want to. Remember, always, that Mother's wary eye will be upon you when you return. I'd forbid you, of course, if I didn't know you'd do it anyway and never tell me the interesting details."

They smiled the smile of perfect understanding.

"And, of course," Mrs. Johnston admitted nobly, "I want to know everything. Don't cheat me of a single thrill, Mary."

Mary kissed her. Mrs. Johnston raised herself on a firm white elbow and called to Mary's back: "Ride on the rear seat, Mary, and don't forget that you're poor now, very poor, indeed."

Mary could visualize the implish smile on her mother's face that accompanied this remark.

She had fully intended at least beginning the drive at the rear seat, but after that, and hearing her mother wait at the window to see, she climbed to the seat beside Ned, announcing:

"Mother's not coming, and you're to please take me a different route today."

Johnston was not at the window. Her face was set and hard as she tried to make up her mind whether she would let her mind wobble on the development before she bolted to New York, or bolt now. It was puzzling, but she got now might solve Mary's problem and a short note which he thrust into his pocket, carefully destroying the others. He still could not decide whether or not to send it.

Dorothy Selden, having waited in vain for some sign of just anger, or at least indignation from Ned, had again the privilege of seeing him ride by, happy and contented, with Mary Johnston seated serenely beside him. It was not to be borne. Dorothy threw herself suddenly, but gracefully, into the chair at the writing desk, and selecting a telegraph blank and pen, wrote rapidly. When she had finished, the message read:

"Ned here under assumed name. What shall I do?"

"Dorothy Selden."

It was directed to Loren Lorimer Rangleley.

The village saw Ned and Mary ride by and snickered. "Dabbs' nervous chasing round after a settlemeter." The snicker was meant to call attention to Ned's folly and presumption, but it was also a jibe at Mary. "She must be hard up for a man," was the comment.

The pair under observation, engaged in the most absorbing game in the world, hastened toward Great Cold Spring, one of the beauty spots of the countryside.

Although the road was as new to Ned as to Mary, he discoursed learnedly on its history, its Indian name, which he was compelled to admit he had forgotten and couldn't pronounce anyway. Mary listened, interested and amused, especially as Ned informed her that he had just "boned up" on the subject this morning.

"Dad's Clerk supplied me with the 'local color,' he told her honestly. 'It isn't at all in my line, but I thought Mrs. Johnston might expect something like it from her 'biped man.'"

"Mr. Carter," asked Mary suddenly, "was your mother Mr. Dabbs' sister?"

Ned nodded. "Oh no, Claude Dabbs is really no relation to me at all. I'm fond of him, and I call him Uncle, that's all."

"Oh, I forgot you told me you were 'adopted,'" and Mary lapsed again into silence. She saw only one thing very clearly, and that was Ned's profile. She liked it.

The Great Cold Spring, Ned told her, was just a quarter of a mile away. As he spoke they came in sight of a placid little lake, fed by the spring.

Some distance up the road, beyond the lake, was a great old farmhouse, which appeared deserted. As they neared the spring, Mary exclaimed with pleasure. Simultaneously the rear of the blue car.

Ned's exclamation was not one of pleasure. He stopped the machine at the side of the road and made ready with jack and wrench. Mary went toward the spring. The pool was deep, but did not look so.

(Continued Next Week)

—The Enterprise \$1.00 a year. —Advertise in The Enterprise.

her that other people's love stories are as big a bore as other people's dreams!"

He turned out the lamp and left the room.

In the morning, when he could get Dabbs alone, Ned's apologies were sincere. But though Ned insisted that he had only dropped off at the end, Claude had a shrewd idea from the lame way in which Ned fished for information, that slumber had overtaken him in the middle of the tale. They were in the garage where Ned had tracked him down, and he only laughed as he put his hand on Ned's arm.



He Turned Out the Lamp and Left the Room.

—The Enterprise \$1.00 a year. —Advertise in The Enterprise.

**THOS. W. PERKINS, Inc.**  
Established 1917  
CORRESPONDENT OF  
**WEST & COMPANY, Bankers**  
Philadelphia  
Members—New York and Philadelphia Stock Exchange

HIGH GRADE INVESTMENTS  
STOCKS AND BONDS  
ACCOUNTS CARRIED  
SHORT TERM TRUST NOTES

Correspondence Solicited  
Office  
159 Court Street, Chestertown, Maryland  
Telephone 109

Feb. 10-11

## NOW YOU CAN WAX-PC'ISH ALL YOUR FLOORS AND LINOLEUM

Easily—Electrically—ten times faster than by hand

Gleaming waxed floors are no longer a luxury—NOW you can have their radiant glow in every room. The new Johnson's Wax Electric Treatment makes WAX the most economical of floor finishes. This treatment takes only a few minutes—there is no hard work—no stooping or kneeling—no messy rags and pails. It won't soil or roughen your hands! And it saves you all the bother and expense of frequent refinishing.

This Johnson's Wax Electric Treatment is so easy anyone can use it. Just spread on a thin coat of Johnson's Polishing Wax with a Lamb's-wool mop. This cleans as it waxes. Then run the Johnson Electric Polisher over the floor and let ELECTRICITY do all the work. This Electric Floor Polisher is much easier to run than a vacuum cleaner—it glides along silently, smoothly, leaving a path of beauty behind it.

It makes no difference whether the floors are old or new—of wood, linoleum, tile or composition. Nor how they are finished—with varnish, shellac, wax or paint.

You can RENT THIS ELECTRIC FLOOR POLISHER FOR \$2.00 A DAY and in just a short time give all your floors and linoleums this beautifying wax treatment.

## JOHNSON'S WAX Electric Floor Polisher

JOHN BARTLEY  
Chestertown Maryland

**FLOORTEX Rugs**

What a pleasant discovery when you find just that rug pattern you've long wished for, at a most reasonable price.

From our selection of FLOORTEX (felt base) Rugs you can choose delightful patterns well suited to your nursery, bedroom, kitchen, sun-porch or bathroom. Certain feed FLOORTEX is known everywhere for durability, economy and satisfactory service.

Let us show you how much a saving these Certain-feed floor-coverings will mean for you.

## NOLAND

Chestertown Maryland

different flavors of Ice Cream at Gill Bros. Parlor on Cross Street

Vanilla	Cherry
Chocolate	Pineapple Ice
Fig Walnut	Kiddie Tub
Frozen Custard	Walnut
Pineapple	Honey Moon
Orange Ice	Special
Dainties	

**GILL BROS**  
Phone 290 Chestertown, Md

—Advertise in The Enterprise.