

LOVE or MONEY

CHAPTER XXI
Mona arrived at the office next morning with the determination to approach Mr. Garretson in the early of the day. At 8:30 a week later she was still waiting. She had not seen him since the day she had left him. She had not seen him since the day she had left him. She had not seen him since the day she had left him.

Mr. Garretson did not answer for an instant. He scribbled busily, signed and blotted the check. "That's what they all say," he checked. He laid it on the desk directly in front of her, and motioned toward it with one hand. "There is the amount you mentioned. Pay it back as you wish. Make your own arrangements. And please forget the check for a moment while I make what may seem a strange suggestion. Request rather, I think I would call it a request."

He stared at Mona a moment and then proceeded. "This check is yours, no matter what answer you may give to this other matter. The two matters are distinct and separate. I gave this my attention first because I wished to get it off your mind. I supposed your trouble was financial and financial worries often distress so deeply that other considerations may not receive fair attention. Therefore bear this in mind. The money—and more if you require it—is yours whatever your reaction to my request may be."

"You say you are not going to be married. Are you affectionate involved?" Again he smiled. "Don't misunderstand me. I am not proposing! But a certain understanding is necessary before I proceed. You have no one in mind?"

"No one," said Mona clearly. "But Mr. Garretson, I don't see—"

"That's all right," he told her. "Frankly, I was afraid that the rather dishing young man who calls in his car at five—but never mind! You say you are neither engaged nor expect to be? Very well."

"Miss Moran, I have a client—this is the firm has a client—who wishes to marry you. Don't interrupt me, please! At the moment he is ill. The marriage, for certain business reasons, must be performed rather soon. Cannot go into that but I assure you that, as such matters generally go, the reasons are acceptable."

"It will not, I suppose, be a marriage such as you may have looked forward to. This client realizes his proposal is unusual. He is wealthy, charming, of excellent family."

"He will give you a year during which you bear his name, sit at the head of his table, consider him as a husband. At the end of that time you may be his wife in reality or go to Reno and receive a quiet adjustment."

"He will treat you with the utmost respect and kindness. I need not mention generosity. Sums such as this," he indicated the check—"will be constantly available. You will have your own car, your own bank account, your own apartment in his home."

"Now," as Mona started to speak—"don't answer just yet! Go back to your desk and think it over. Personally I advise it. You cannot lose and you may gain a great deal. Happiness, I mean. In any case you will always be provided for plentifully."

Mr. Garretson rose. "It's been rather an ordeal. I don't mind telling you, to put forward this strange request. But there were reasons why it could not be done otherwise. Think it over. Let me know by three o'clock this afternoon. If you agree—and again let me remark that you cannot lose by the arrangement—in a year or so you can marry someone else and bring him a small fortune! If your answer is 'yes' we'll talk over more specific plans. If you decline we'll forget it."

"I'll think it over," she walked with her to the door. As he grasped the knob Mona raised her eyes uncertainly.

"May I—may I ask who is doing me this honor?" she said timidly. Then she smiled for the formality of her question sounded like a motion picture caption.

Mr. Garretson smiled too. "You may, the gentleman in question is Barry Townsend."

(To Be Continued)

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LITTLE ORPHAN ANNIE

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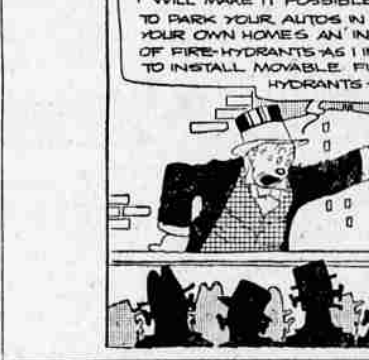
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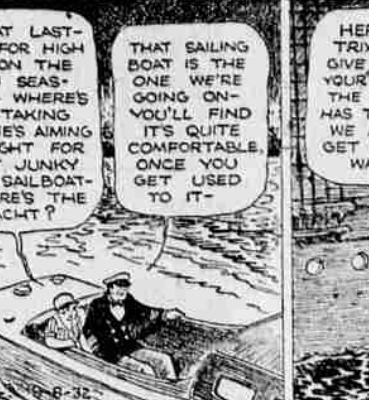
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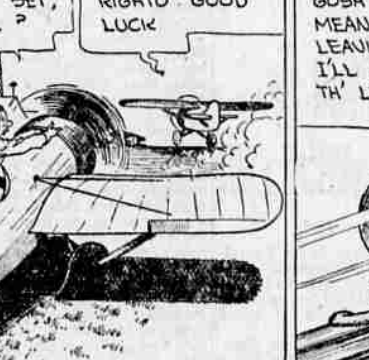
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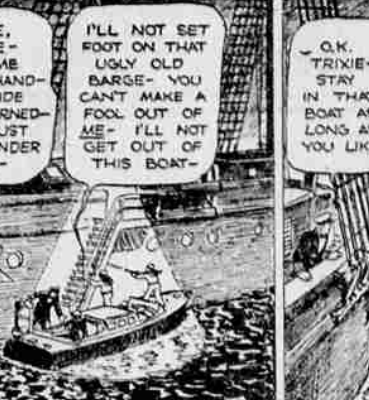
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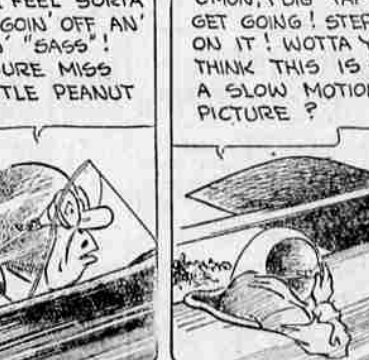
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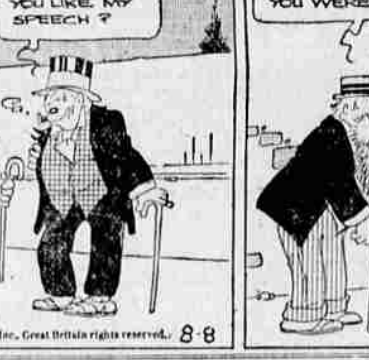
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THIS CURIOUS WORLD

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THE BITTERLING FISH

LAYS ITS EGGS ON THE POND MUSSEL—THE YOUNG HATCH OUT THE MUSSELS GILLS AND USE ITS SKILL, AS A NURSERY.

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THE PLANET VENUS

SOMETIMES SHINES SO BRIGHTLY THAT IT CASTS A SHADOW.

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OUT OUR WAY

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WHY MOTHERS GET GRAY

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