DARLING FOOL

by MABEL McELLIOTT

CHAPTER XXXII

"Mon." She admitted it, seeking words to paint her own feelings. Not being afraid you're never—never going to get what you want out of life. That it's going to pass you by. That by the time you're 30 you'll be dragged out, old—missing—everything." She halted, the word hanging on her lips. Charles supplied it.

"Darling love?"

"Yes." Monnie looked at him demurely. Let him know her secret. He guessed it already, anyhow.

"Yes. Missing the only person you want. Losing out because of, oh—little things. The right dresses, the right sort of place to entertain, the little things that make a girl pretty and wanted."

"Monnie!" Charles Eustace's tone was almost amused. "That's not love what you're talking about."

"Oh, but it is, it is! You don't understand!"

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"That," explained Charles gently, "is kid stuff. Popularity—going to dances—that sort of thing. Do you suppose," he inquired, "I'd pass up girls I really cared about just because she didn't have the right sort of frocks? As if that mattered!"

"Not to you, perhaps," said Monnie bitterly. "Not in theory, either, to any man. But it's what attracts." She tried to strike a lighter note. No good bringing her own problems into this. "Look at Kay," she said impersonally. "She's beautiful and sweet and good. She ought to be having splendid times, enjoying herself. What happens? Night after night she sits at home with the rest of us. She hasn't money to entertain or dress properly and she lives on the wrong side of town. It's not fair."

"Kay's a darling," said the man and again Monnie felt the sudden irrational little twinge of pain. Promptly he turned back to their original argument. "Kay wants you to go abroad with Miss Anstice," he said. "She's told me so a dozen times."

They had reached the front gate now. Monnie opened it, leaning on it, facing the tall young man in his perfectly cut, careless tweed clothes. "You're sweet to be so interested," she said. "I wish I could."

She was struck, as she spoke, with the curious look he gave her, a blend of kindness and exasperation—and something else. She could not define it. Something hung between the pair for an instant — some unspoken thought — some tension of feeling. Monnie shook herself, breaking away from the spell of those brilliant, almost mocking, dark eyes.

"I must go in," she said in confusion. "I'm late as it is."

Charles lifted his hat and as he turned to go Monnie forgot him, forgot everything. Mark O'Dare, freckled and tousle-headed, dashed down the path, bound on some concern of his own.

"Mail for you, Monnie," he yelled. Her heart began to thud. The long awaited letter had come at last!

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SANDRA said "You've been awfully sweet to me, Danny." Her voice broke a little on the words. She was leaning against the fireplace, the sweep of gray stone behind her throwing into high relief the perfect contour of her honey colored head. The flames from the logs threw shadows on the blue silk lounging pajamas she wore and Dan thought, quite idly, that she made a graceful picture. He was in riding clothes, casual and smart—a western even to the big handkerchief knotted about his throat. They were alone—except for the Chinese servants. His mother and the rest of the party had gone to see a picture show at Benning, eight miles away.

"It's all right," he said rather awkwardly. "Glad to do anything I could. You had a rotten time of it and you've been a good little soldier."

"Do you honestly think so, Dan?" Her eyes shone. This was the praise she wanted above all else.

"Of course I do," Dan reflected that it was something of an effort, supplying Sandra with the moral courage she needed. Only this morning his mother had said to him firmly, "You've simply got to pour confidence into that poor nervous child, son. She's splendid but she had a shock and it is our duty to see her through this bad time."

Ever since the kidnaping Sandra had been having "bad headaches" and "wretched nights." It was not, she said with a charmingly patient smile, at all like her to go to pieces this way. The others agreed and pointed out how brave she had been through the dreadful experience itself. Now—well, Sandra needed Dan to lean on, needed him at her side when they rode. She seemed perfectly content, perfectly happy when he was murmuring in her ear, when they sat at table, side by side.

"You're awfully good for me," she would say softly with a sidewise glance at him. Dan felt, in a puzzled way, that he was committing himself to something without knowing what it was all about.

"Sure you didn't want to see that picture?" he said now, hoping to change the subject.

"No, honestly," Sandra said with pretty eagerness. "I'm perfectly content—perfectly—just to sit here and talk. Isn't it cozy?"

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Dan agreed, stuffing his pipe and settling himself in the big leather chair opposite.

"Just like," giggled the girl in blue velvet, "just like old married folks." She shrugged her shoulders and murmured delicately, "Honestly, Dan, I don't know what's got into me lately. I—somehow I seem to be changing. This time last year I thought of nothing but tearing around. I was in Monte Carlo in October—having the most wonderful time. And now——"

Dan prompted her. "And now what?"

"Well, I seem to be perfectly contented with the simplest sort of things. Books and good friends—" Her limpid gray eyes besought him to understand.

Dan, sensing dangerous ground said gruffly, "What about Monte Carlo? Did you have a good time there? Father wouldn't take us when we were over. Said it was a gambling hell and he didn't want us to go near it."

"Oh, Dan, how quaint!" Her laugh rippled. "I can't imagine—" She broke off suddenly to say quickly that of course his father was a dear—so upright—so charming but Dan had to admit he was a bit old-fashioned.

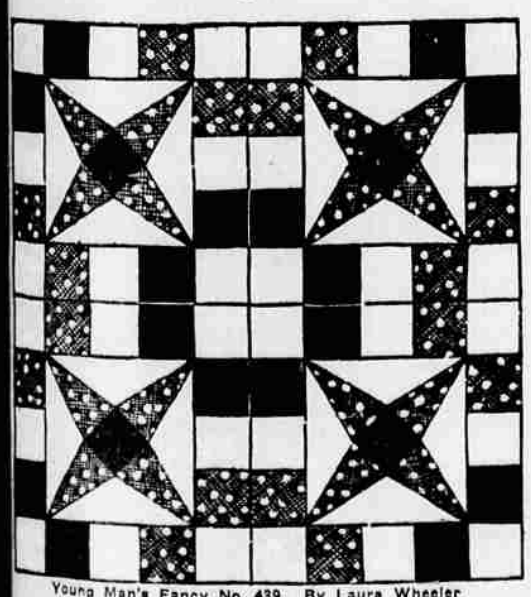
"I'd love to show you the place," she said with enthusiasm. "Oh, the times I had on the Riviera last autumn! It was all too marvelous. There was a count who rushed me frantically. Honestly, Danny, I almost took him up. He was the best looking thing! And there were two Englishmen — don't you adore the British?" she broke off to inquire.

"Can't say I do," said the man. "Considering that my forebears came from County Sligo, I'm not so crazy about them."

"Well, I do—simply adore them. You're rather like an English country gentleman yourself, Dan. Big and taciturn—and handsome."

(To Be Continued)

PATCHWORK QUILT PATTERN



Young Man's Fancy No. 439. By Laura Wheeler

Some quilt names call to mind a definite picture, suggested by the block; some recall early American history; others, like Young Man's Fancy, are of the sort of names we just must believe. Young men of the past, like those of today, undoubtedly had many fancies in quilt patterns as in other things. This pattern though, showed a good choice on the young man's part, for besides being a very lovely pattern when completed, it is a very simple block to make. In this case, giving in to the young man's choice was not at all a difficult task for the needlewoman.

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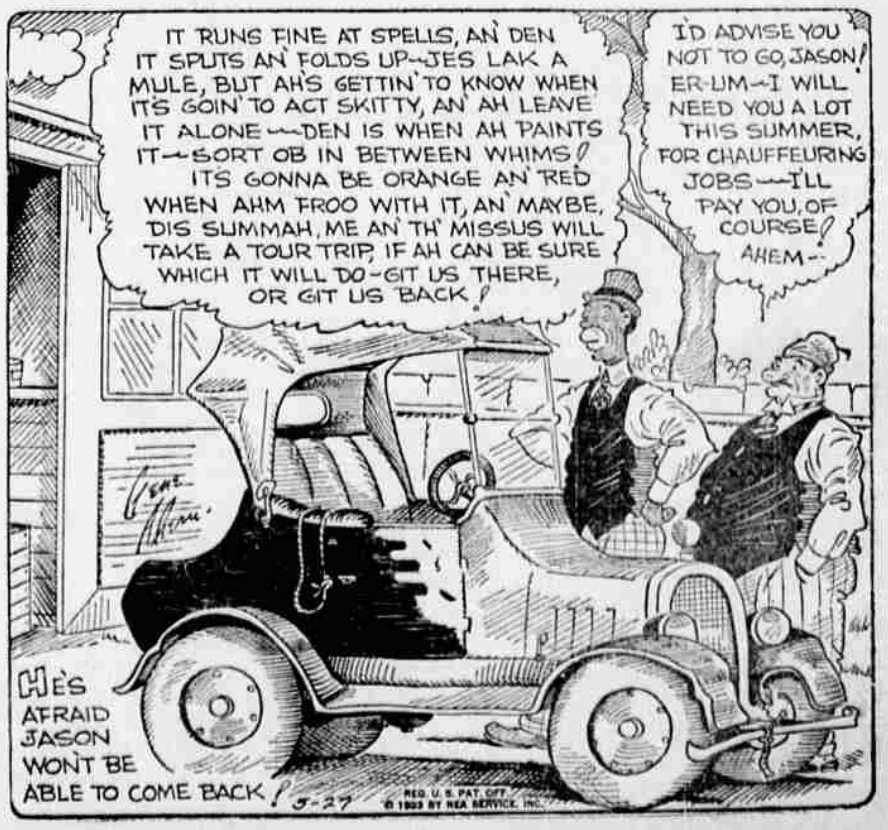
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