

DARLING FOOL

by MABEL McLELLON

CHAPTER XLIII

He liked Arthur Mackenzie. She was a selfish pig to be away from them all, enjoying this luxury. She would have to make it up to them when she got back. But how? Suddenly, like a black vista, the years yawned before Monnie. What was she going to do with her life? With Dan out of it, she seemed aimless—couldn't make plans. She'd devoted her heart and soul to him, had wrapped up all her ambitions in him. This was, after all, only an interlude. She'd have to go back home to a dreary, humdrum job and make the most of it. What about her dreams of doing something splendid for her mother and the rest? She'd never be able to.

She wrapped the dark velvet cloak around her as the pleasant British voice on the telephone announced Mackenzie's arrival.

"You look lovely, as always," he was bowing over her hand. She was whisked into the inevitably luxurious motor car that always attended this man's comings and goings. A soft rug was tucked around her feet. Mackenzie spoke through a tube and the motor purred noiselessly. The car slid forward. Fog held the night without but in the small intimacy of the car the two people sat, warm and enclosed.

"You'll like this place tonight, Monnie," he had a pleasant voice, she reflected. Deep and resonant.

"That's one of the many things I like about you," he continued with gravity. "Your youthful enthusiasm. I've known so many jaded people—sated with life. With you everything's new."

"That's because I haven't been any place before," the girl told him without self-consciousness.

As they sat down at the candle-lit table with an obsequious pair of waiters hovering in attendance, she returned his smile with one of honest liking. How nice this man had been to her! Last night at the party Corinth Fawcett had said to her with a curious high laugh, "Artie's taken a great fancy to you. Make the most of it."

And when Monnie had looked at her curiously the other girl had cried, gratingly, "Oh, don't be a little fool. He's all right, Artie is."

It must be true—the gossip she'd heard—that Corinth and Mackenzie had been in love with each other although he was almost twice her age. But she was married to someone else now. It didn't seem to matter. "If I'd ever cared for anyone like that," she thought Monnie, "I should hate the thought of giving him up to someone else."

Suddenly she realized that Mackenzie was studying her intently.

"What is it?" he asked.

"I've a bit of news for you, Monnie."

Why did her heart beat faster at the tone?

"I've got to leave tomorrow. Got a cable from the office this afternoon."

"Oh, I'm sorry!" It was true. She would miss this man and his many kindnesses.

He stared at her. "Monnie, I wonder—I want you to come back with me!"

HAD she really heard Arthur Mackenzie say those words or was she dreaming? Monnie, lacing her fingers in her lap, gave him a direct, almost childlike look.

"I—I don't understand," she faltered. "You're going back to New York. But Miss Anstie and I plan, as you know, to start for Paris next week."

(To Be Continued)

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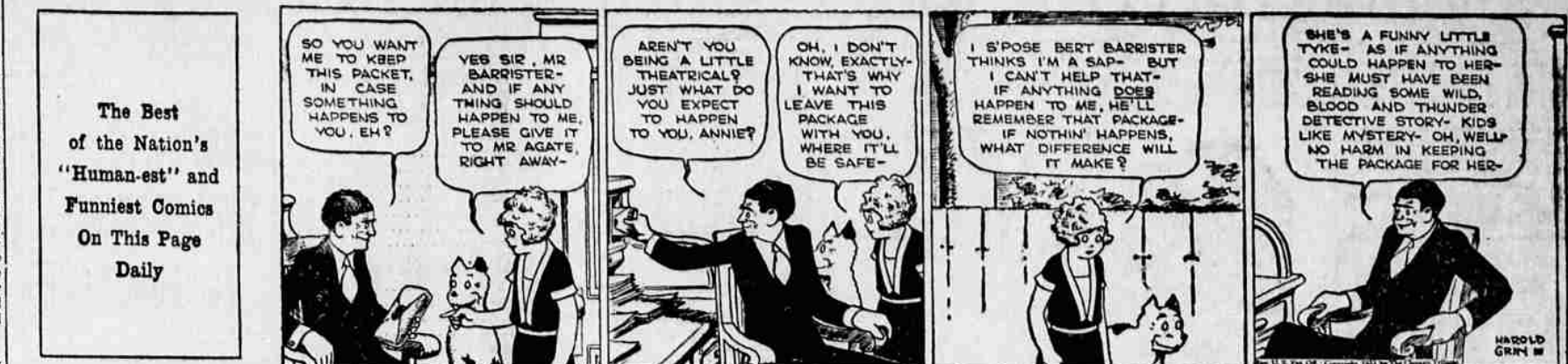
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(To Be Continued)

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THIMBLE THEATRE Starring POPEYE

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THE BREATH