DARLING FOOL

by MABEL McELLIOTT

CHAPTER LX

famous specialist bustled in before the lamps were lit. There a hurried consultation. Nothing ed to make any difference. The t was the same.

Annie was conscious once during long hours of Charles Eustace at side.

es must come away and get rest," he urged softly. "This is no good. He doesn't know here."

shook her head, gently stub- As if she would leave now! she had given Dan her word! before midnight he opened his It seemed to Monnie that he at her. His mother, swaying her feet, called his name. Dan those dark blue eyes of his and a little shudder shook That was all. It was as if he smiled at them to say goodby. nurse led Mrs. Cardigan away Monnie, dazed, found herself in corridor. Charles' arm was about It wasn't true, she thought. wasn't gone. Oh, there must something someone could do! It monstrous, unbelievable!

shuffling old man by her side weeping frankly, like a child. father. He said, his fea- working painfully, "Thank you, Thank you. You made it for him."

when she was beside Charles in the again. The same stars, the ones had shone above her last night, bright in the sky. A girl and arms linked, went by in the laughing. The word was going quite as if nothing was wrong. she felt something clutch at her She wanted to say, "Charles, afraid I'm going to be ill." But never managed the words.

* * *

When she awoke she was in her bed. Her mother, anxious eyed, over her with a cup of ing liquid in one hand.

Dr. Waterman says you're to this and you're not to talk," told Monnie. The girl was dient. She felt strangely ex- ted, strangly limp. Through some of fog she was grateful to them for taking care of her. They were —everyone was.

the days that followed Monnie slow picked up the threads of life again. She was broken, she herself. Nothing could really her whole but she would do best she could with what was She was so quiet, so submis- that she frightened them all. she want to go for a drive? from Bill who had lately ac- a small second-hand sedan.) that would be nice. Bill would dogredly about the countryside, silent passenger at his side. She feign interest when he pointed thing out to her. "Yes, that was wasn't it? Thanks for taking Bill, baffled and worried, would her home again, feeling dimly used.

Then Mr. Vernon asked her to back to her old work Monnie she thought she'd better not. would be dreadful, having all her friends come in and pity her, sympathizing with her wordlessly, hing to see "how she was tak- it." Besides Dr. Waterman told he wanted her for his secretary, take calls in the office and help his Wednesday children's clinic. work was really the first thing her attention. Monnie flung into it with a passion of tion. It was an anodyne for her When she worked she forgot past year, its fretting and dis- tments and heartache, with her loss at the top of the high

Sandra she did not see again. A after Dan's funeral Sandra had away, heavily veiled, with her

She's married for life," Kay told O'Dare, not without a certain satisfaction. "She's gone to see tic surgeon in Vienna, Linda hoping he can fix her up. say there's a bad scar across forehead and one near the h."

Mrs. O'Dare shuddered. "Don't tell me about it."

* * *

Kay said, "Did you know they'd all been drinking the night she and Dan ran off? Sandra wasn't but she saw to it that Dan had too much and then dared him to elope. He was in one of his black moods and did it just to show off. He never really knew what happened."

"Does Monnie know that?"

"I think she does," Kay said. "Charles said he wanted to tell her. He said she should know about it. Charles says Dan never loved anyone but Monnie only he was too weak to come out and claim her in front of his family."

"Sometimes I think we were all wrong, discouraging Monnie about Dan," sighed the mother. "I felt sure they were terribly unsuited and that she'd never be happy with him. But now—well, I don't know. It seems to me perhaps they should have taken their chances. Maybe Monnie's life is ruined. She has the most tenacious affections. She isn't like most girls nowadays."

"Meaning me?" Kay grinned.

"Well, you know you do lead some of these boys rather a dance," said the mother, smiling.

Kay set a blue hat jauntily atilt on her bright curls. "They love to be treated that way," she said saucily. The postman's knock sounded and she flew to open the door.

"New York mail for Monnie," she said. "I hope it's something that will cheer her up. Bye. I'm on my way. I've got to go to the Ladies' Aid Christmas sale before I stop at the office." And she was gone.

When Monnie came in for her luncheon she opened the big creamy envelope. There was a brief note from Arthur Mackenzie.

"Dearest Monica" (he had written), "I've just heard the sad news from Miss Corey who wrote me from Paris. Please let me know if there is anything I can do. Are you well? What are your plans? Let me hear from you soon. Devotedly, Arthur Mackenzie."

Monnie remembered him gratefully. Here was a man who asked nothing of her—not love, not even friendship really, but who wanted to be kind. She wrote to him in this mood, opening her heart simply and honestly. The correspondence that followed was a heavy one. Monnie's little notes flew back and forth and almost every day a square, parchment colored envelope addressed in Mackenzie's bold handwriting was deposited in the letterbox for her.

* * *

Just before Christmas there arrived at the O'Dare home what Mark excitedly described as "a bale of roses" from a city florist's shop. Charles Eustace, on the heels of the messenger boy, lifted his brows at the sight.

"They're from Mr. Mackenzie," Monica stammered, rather at a loss before Charles' quizzical glance. Why was it lately that he had seemed so strange, almost cool to her? He was always nice to Kay, chaffing her in pleasant, brotherly fashion. With Monnie he seemed formal, almost distant, in his manner.

"Did you want—Kay's working late tonight," Monnie went on, still rather at a loss.

"I knew that." Charles laid his stick on the hall table and Monnie saw that he was in evening clothes. "I'm going on to the Willard's for dinner. They're giving a dance for Ellen."

So that was it, Monnie thought. Ellen Willard, the daughter of the new family who had taken the Lawrence's house, was a beauty as well as brilliant intellectually. She and Charles would be certain to hit it off well.

"I'm wishing you all a happy Christmas," Charles told her formally. He weighed his stick in his hand, giving the mammoth florist's box another quizzical glance.

"I knew Mackenzie in Monte Carlo," he said irrelevantly. "Nice fellow—very."

(To Be Continued)

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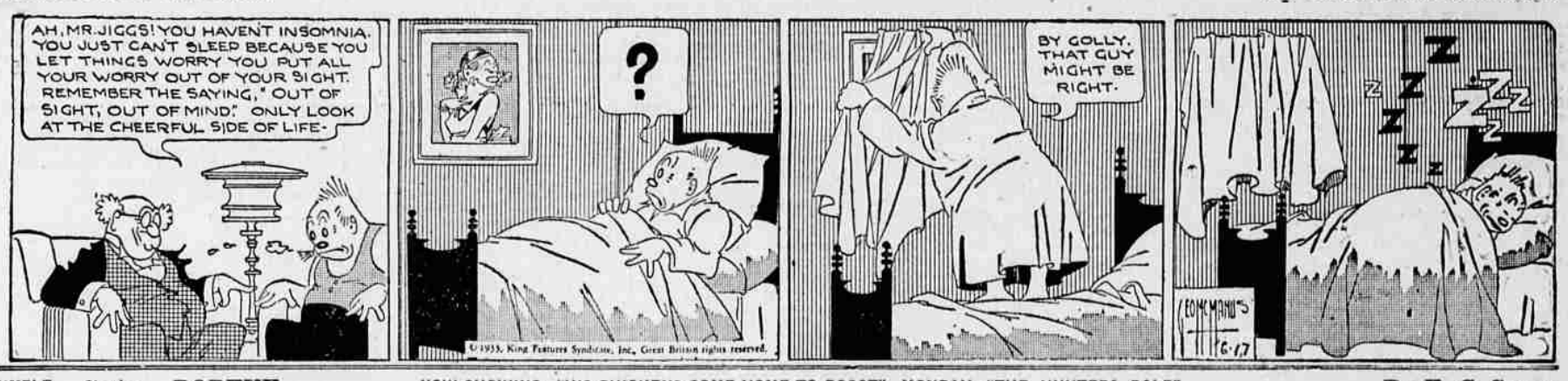

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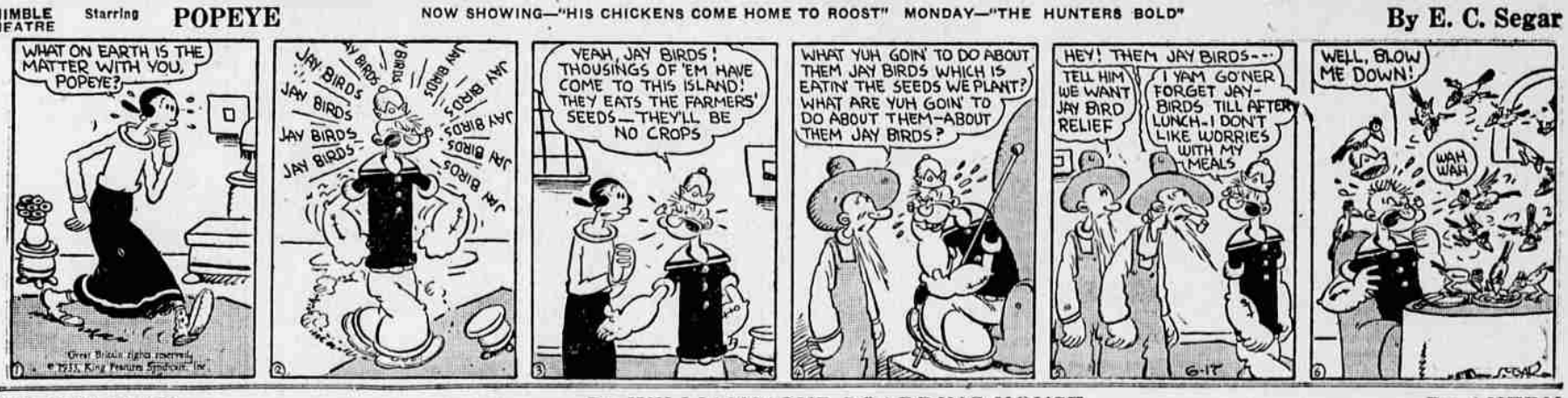

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