

DARLING FOOL

CHAPTER LXVII

"You're joking," she really thought. He was a young man of no account and no money, but no matter. Not much, that is. Or so she had always thought.

"Wait and see," he told her mysteriously. "Perhaps I'm not the best boy you thought."

And then they forgot all about the mundane matters. For the moment, at least.

MISS BRIGGS' mother stopped by at Vernon's drug store to buy some bicarbonate of soda. She had eaten too much chicken salad at the wedding reception and besides she wanted to talk over the excitement of somebody and she had just seen Miss Anstice Corey go in.

"Lovely wedding!" Miss Anstice was beaming. "Lovely pair."

"The bridegroom is a very handsome man," Mrs. Briggs contributed. "I thought Monnie looked a bit fly-away and wasn't that a real plain dress for her to choose? I can't imagine why she didn't wear a veil."

Miss Anstice raised the lorgnette she had learned to use in London and regarded her neighbor coolly.

"Monnie looked perfectly beautiful," she told Mrs. Briggs, "and that bi-colored frock was in the best possible taste. Her hat was a French one."

The tone alone should have warned the irrepressible mother of Miss Briggs but it failed to.

"Well, I thought it looked mighty funny, sitting on the side of her head as that you could see all her curls," she didn't look like a grownup woman, as it seemed to me a bride should look. That hat and the dress, too, made her look like a little girl. Even though she's years older than my Rissy!" This last was delivered somewhat spitefully.

Miss Anstice bowed, sweeping out of the store majestically and thus getting an end to the conversation. Mrs. Briggs took up her package and her handbag and started home. It was just like Rissy to flounce off with those girls—her "crowd" she called them—leaving her mother to go on alone. But wasn't that Gertrude Hampton just ahead? She might get a few more details from Gertrude who was "intimate" with the family. Hadn't there been something between Gertrude and Bill O'Dare several years back?

"Well, I see you were there, too!" Mrs. Briggs' voice had a vineyard age. "Quite a blowout."

Gertrude looked really pretty in that blue outfit. Funny she had never thought of Gertrude before except as a plain girl.

"It was beautiful, wasn't it? They just left. I waited and caught the bouquet!" Gertrude explained. Mrs. Briggs observed for the first time the small nosegay of blush roses and pale sweet peas that Gertrude held.

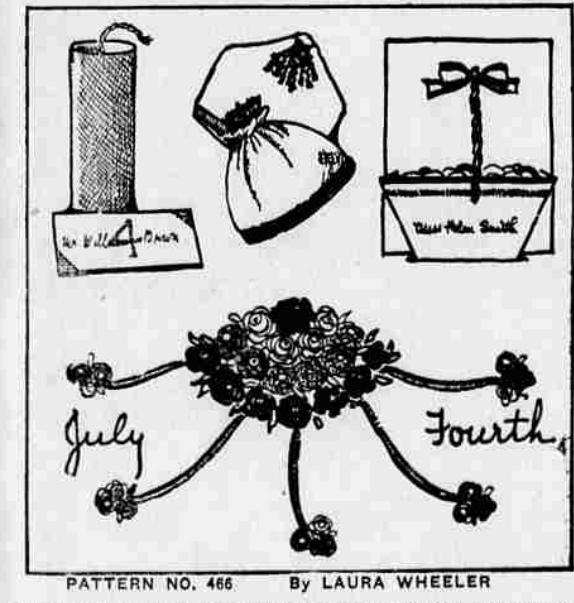
"My, my, quite exciting! You'll be the next. Why couldn't Rissy have caught it? That would have been something to talk about."

Gertrude smiled, looking tranquilly at her own.

"Well, we weren't going to announce it till Bill comes back next spring but he said today we might as well—" She held out her left hand, showing the modest pearl ring.

"Well, well, thought Mrs. Briggs, marching off with a sour expression, so that was the way of it! That yellow-haired hussy hadn't got Bill, after all, and she had quarreled with her old friend, Edith O'Dare, about the story. It was all very disappointing. Rissy's beau of the moment was a clerk at one of the red-front stores on Main street and here Edith O'Dare's children were turning out so smartly. A person couldn't help being envious.

4TH OF JULY PARTY



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