

Lovable

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CHAPTER XXXVI

THE address on Bond street, when Peter arrived there, proved to be an unimpressive brick apartment building. There was something depressing about the exterior and something infinitely more depressing about the interior. But to Peter it appeared as a green oasis in a barren desert. He would find Ann here! He was sure the telephone message had come from her.

He ran up the uncarpeted steps, hearing voices above. The door to one room was open. It must be filled with a great many people, for some of them had spilled out into the hall. Peter recognized them as reporters. He frowned blackly. If they were giving Ann trouble—

And then he stood for a moment, weak from disappointment, leaning against the door.

An angry young man, with pillows at his back, was sitting up in bed talking very crossly to his visitors, who grinned cheerfully back at him and went on talking notes.

The angry young man was Lawrence. The other man was a chauffeur, but he wore no uniform. Then Peter saw Carol.

"Oh, Peter darling! I'd about given you up—what a time you took to come! Peter, these men know the whole story about my slipping off the train and coming back to marry Larry. How do they find out things like that? Peter, can't you keep them from putting it in the paper?"

Carol had rushed into his arms. Then, by degrees, Peter heard what had happened. His sister had married the young football hero who had been dropped from college last spring for some escapade and whose disappearance had stirred the sport world.

"I had a tip that Ames was in town, working as a chauffeur or taxi driver," one reporter said to Peter. "The same fellow told me when Ames got his job, tipped me off to where he was staying. I recognized your sister, did some sleuthing until I found out about the marriage and then came here to get the complete story. And what do I find? Reporters from every wheel in town camping on the door-step. The same fellow must have told everybody else. Gosh, what a tough break when I thought I had it exclusive!"

"Now, if you will just pose with your arm about his shoulder," a camera man was saying persuasively to Carol.

"The idea! I will not."

"I guess they'll have a picture of you in the society files. And I know the files are full of pictures of Ames."

"What does it matter? What difference does it make?" Peter had said later. "All that matters is being happy. The next thing is to get you youngsters home."

Carol followed him to his car. Peter, something has happened to you. Why didn't Ann come?"

Peter told her. And then he was hearing about Ann's visits, her pledge to secrecy.

No use now to be ashamed of his unjust doubts, when a more terrible doubt was tormenting him.

The newspapers apparently thought Carol Kendall was to be congratulated for winning the young man whose football playing had made him an idol. His father had received the news of the marriage over telephone and was coming at once.

It was upon the note of, "I can forgive everything except your not taking me into your confidence," that Mrs. Kendall met the runaways. She had been influenced by the newspapers. To her amazement Lawrence came and not his marriage to Carol, was the dominant theme of all the articles.

Peter went out to break the news to his grandfather and stayed all night. The older Kendall was gently shocked by the change in his grandson.

Peter looked thin and worn. His eyes were stricken. But the greatest change was not physical. He showed weariness of spirit, a letting down mentally and spiritually. Peter didn't seem to care what happened. The world could go to smash. It already had smashed for Peter.

The labor trouble at the factory had been cleared up. Prices were rising and his grandfather had revised the salary scale, with substantial wage increases. The arbitration committee had become a permanent organization and differences had been ironed out, for the time, at least. Peter's grand-

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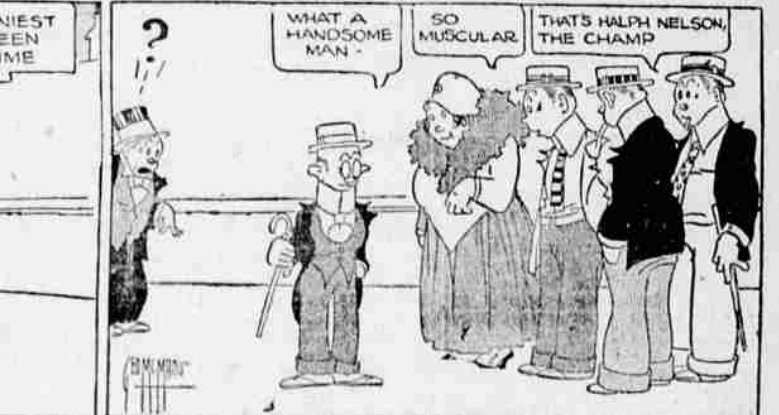
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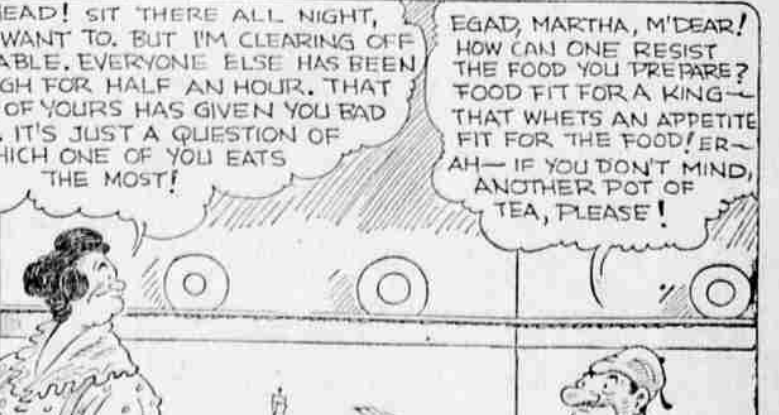
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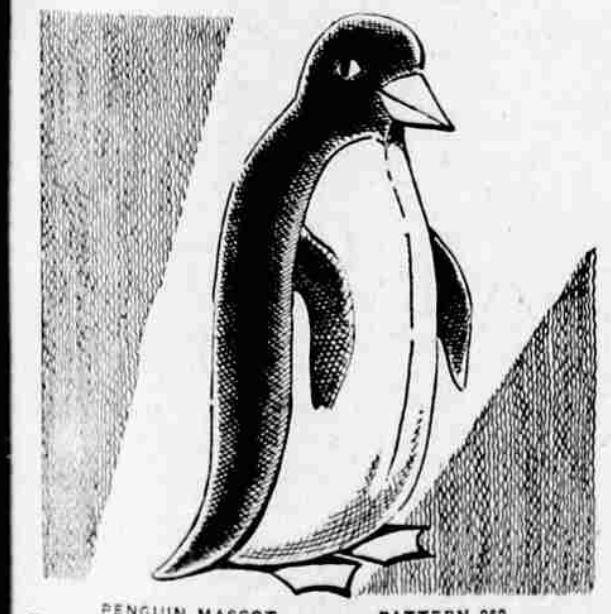
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