

Summer Sweethearts

By Mabel McElliott
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CHAPTER XV



in handy. I'm saving for a new dress for the picnic next week. Bill hasn't asked me yet but I'm sure he will. The Elk's Club. He doesn't belong but his uncle does."

Life, thought Katharine, was comparatively simple for girls like Isabel. Doubtless she would marry her Bill in due time and settle down to a life of saving and babies and quarreling and making up. Isabel was frank in her adoration for the hulking young man who drove the express truck. Katharine knew that his reputation in In-Iduck was none too good. He had been in some sort of fight at one of the roadhouses the year before. He was a swaggering, bolded young man, handsome in a crude way. Katharine felt dimly that little Isabel, who lived in a shabby one-story house over on the wrong side of the tracks, deserved something distinctly better than that. But Isabel wanted Bill—so it was really none of anyone's business, Katharine reminded herself.

She drove past the Mercer house slowly, hoping one of the children would be out in the yard. But the car was not in the drive and Katharine could see the turbaned head of the colored maid at one of the upper windows; rugs were being vigorously shaken.

"I do like Mrs. Mercer," she said to herself. "Wonder why Daddy was so stiff about her! Usually he makes a fuss about a pretty woman..."

Bertine had been inclined, as usual, to discourage any connection with the Mercers.

"They want to get in with the right crowd, that sort of people," Bertine had said in the assured tone that always irked Katharine. "Just be polite but don't encourage them."

Usually Katharine didn't bother to argue with her stepmother, but this time she had lifted her voice in protest.

"I don't think Violet Mercer wants to 'get in with' anyone," she said indignantly. "Why, she knows all sorts of people in the city who do important things—sculptors and writers and that sort of thing. Why on earth should she want to know any of us?"

"Thank you, Katharine, thank you very much," Bertine had said stiffly. "We all know what you think of In-Iduck. And yet I must remind you that some of the most splendid people, the finest names in the county, are here."

Bertine had gone on in this vein for some little time, and Katharine had listened with a maddening face. It was always like this, she reminded herself angrily. Whenever she found a friend of her own, whose pedigree had not been investigated from a to z, Bertine would be sure to put in a meddling finger.

"I hate her," the girl decided, whirling her car recklessly around the corner of the River Road. She would go to see Mrs. Mercer again, no matter what her stepmother said! She had decided that.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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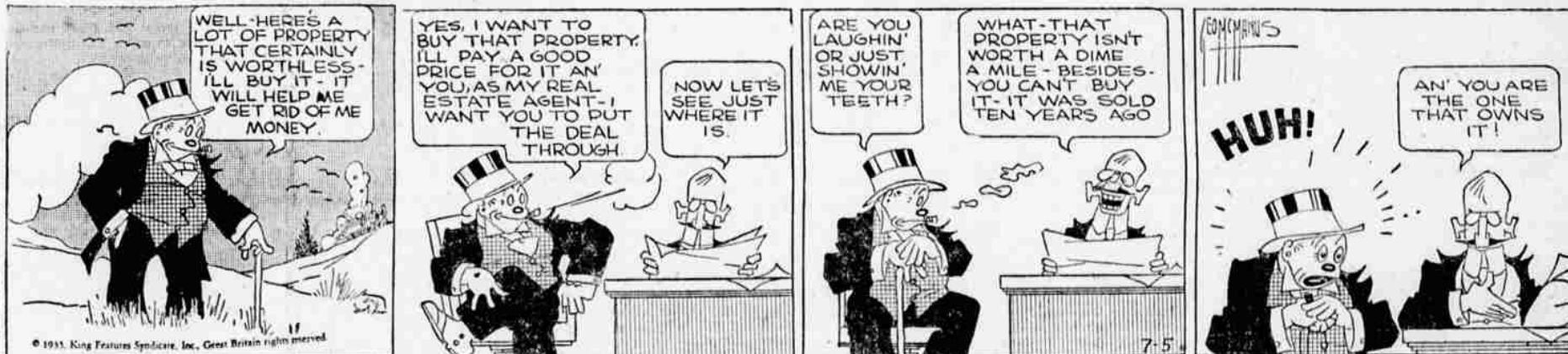
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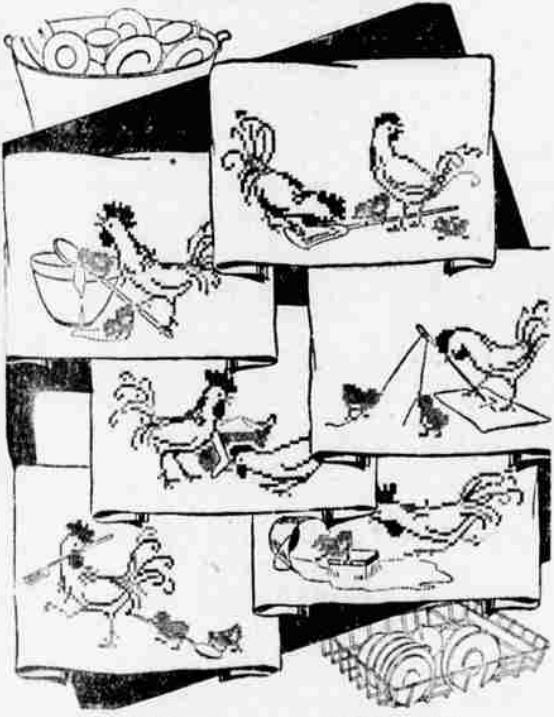
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