

Summer Sweethearts

By Mabel McElliot
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CHAPTER XXVIII



naturally and simply. Her eyes, quite involuntarily, filled with tears. She turned away to hide them.

"Don't..." That the old, old pain should be beginning again—why, that was unbearable. She had thought to conquer it for all time.

"You're very good to me," he said, low-voiced. His lean, brown fingers closed over her wrist. Her hand lay in his clasp quite unresistingly.

"It was the least I could do," she managed to say, in the silence.

"I can't tell you how it makes me feel," he went on, very gently. "I had squared about now to face her. Unwillingly she lifted her eyes to his. There was a split second—and then she was in his arms, her face crushed against his shoulder, against the cloth of that worn tweed coat she knew and loved so well.

There was only this moment of weakness. Then the girl pulled herself away to the train—

"What can we be thinking of?" she cried. "I must—we both of us must be quite mad."

"Same for the first time in months, you mean," said the man dryly. "Let's face it, Katharine..."

"There's nothing to face," she said stubbornly. "I rush to tell you that you're in trouble; we both have a silly moment. That's all. You wait here, Michael. I'll dash back to town and get you some money. Then I'll drive you to the train—"

He had her hand again in that cool, gentle, curiously strong grip.

"I'm mad about you," he said. "You've got to hear it now. I've loved you for months..."

"What are you saying? You're going to marry someone else?"

The words were out. She hadn't meant to say them.

"Tell me you care a little too, Katharine." His stately eyes, with the laughter lines about them, were wooing, compelling her.

"I can't. It—it wouldn't be true," she lied. But her eyes, her glowing cheeks told the truth. She was in his arms again, as if unwillingly. Their lips met in that long first kiss which is the privilege of lovers. She sprang away.

"Have you—have you kissed Sally Moon like that?" she demanded, panting in young fury.

"You know I haven't."

"How do I know? The whole town's talking. You're engaged to her, aren't you?"

"I was until five minutes ago—"

"You can't jilt a girl, Michael Heathcote. It isn't in you. I wouldn't let you, anyhow."

Her eyes blazed at him.

"Oh, wouldn't you? Engagements have been broken before this—"

His face was dark; his eyes flashed stormy lightning.

Katharine wrung her hands together. "We're wasting time. Already those men are at the school, looking for you. What are we to do?"

"Michael's eyes held her. "You do love me a little, Katharine?" Her name was like a caress on his lips.

"Do you suppose," blazed the girl, "do you imagine for one single minute I'd be here if I didn't?" Her barriers were down now. She flung the words at him as if in furious anger.

"God help me. I do love you. And you're going to marry another woman. And there are detectives after you. I would get myself into a hideous mess like this, when there are millions of fine, decent men I might care for..."

"You don't think I'm decent?"

"How can you be?" she asked. "Engaged to one girl—making love to another. Running foul of the law. Why, I must be half mad to think of you, even."

"I adore you when you're like this," the man exulted, staring down at her. "Once I thought you were so cool, and aloof but now—"

"Now? What do you think of me now, Michael Heathcote?"

"I think you're marvelous."

Tall, fair-haired girl in white linen, lean, sun-tanned man in tweeds and riding boots, they faced each other almost like enemies. Katharine's breath came thick and fast; her blue eyes were wide and dark with excitement.

(To Be Continued)

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7-20-35

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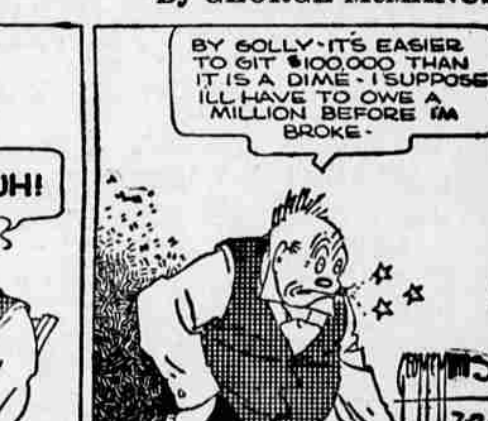
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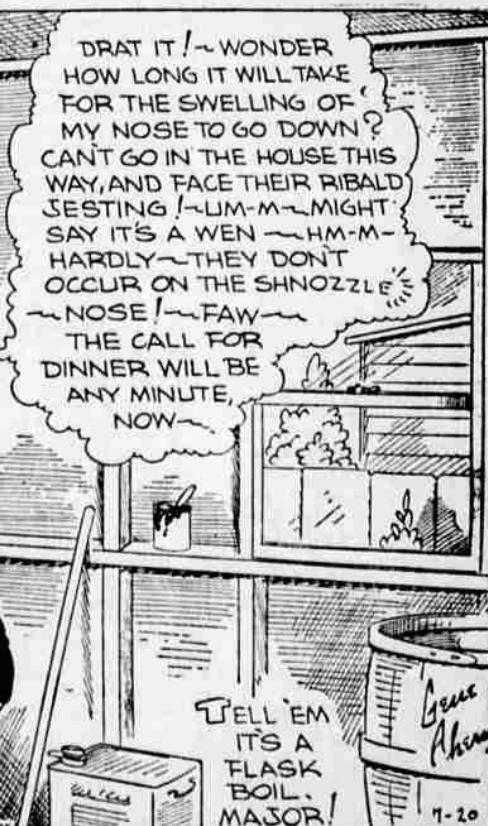
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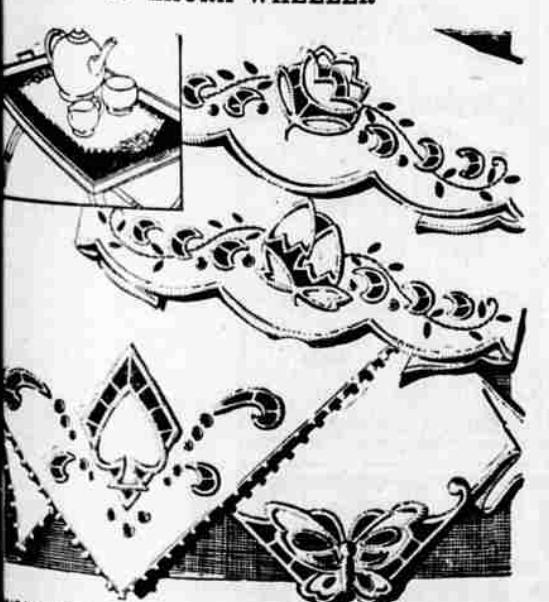
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WORK MOTIFS

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