

Darling Fool

By MABEL McELLIOTT

BEGIN HERE TODAY
MONNIE O'DARE, beautiful, sweet and so in love with DAN CARDIGAN, half to son of the local fortune. Dan professes to love her but is often neglectful. When she needs a friend CHARLES LEWIS comes to her aid. Monnie believes SANDRA LAWRENCE is Dan's own set. In crying to her from HILL MONNIE's older brother, plans to marry ANGIE GILLEN, who works in a candy shop, as soon as she gets a divorce. KAY O'DARE is and still is a high school student, and with poverty. At a dinner party at Charles' house Monnie meets a One who looks like a BETTY, a housemaid at the Lawrence home. hates Sandra and suspects her of "stealing" JIM, the chauffeur. Bill and Angie quarrel. Angie says she hasn't money to get the divorce through quickly. NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER XII

KAY said, "I don't believe a word of it. You're just being nice to me." She went on, "I'll bet you say that to all the girls you meet," and smiled to show she didn't mind it.

The young-old man in the double-breasted suit grinned at her. Facilest was the necktie, striped and shining. Facilest the set of his sleek black hair. He had little lines around his eyes and his cheeks wore that too-well-barbered look. He had the air of weariness that comes to a man who stays up late of nights and talks too rapidly of days.

He said, "Baby, you're the prettiest thing this side of Chicago. Know what I mean, you've got class. Lots of 'em in the front rows of churches would be jealous of you."

Kay, walking down High street in the neighborhood of Vernonia, drug store, took a swift look behind her as she plunged. There was a good deal of traffic (for Belvedere) at this time. It was 4 o'clock. The high school had long since disgorged its chattering, bright-clad throngs. Shabby ancient cars nosed the slooker sedans belonging to the young men of Belvedere's "younger set." Kay did not want to be seen with this man, the traveling salesman who supplied Belvedere's one department store with silk stockings. Belvedere would not understand, said Kay to herself. Especially Monnie.

Or Mother.

Still she didn't know what they objected to. He was polite—as nice as he could be, really. And he made the boys in Kay's class seem awfully raw and awkward.

She and Clarissa Briggs had "just run into him" one day at the Sweet Shoppes. They had been giggling over maple nut sundae. Kay conscious of the fact that she should have saved her allowance for new shoes instead of frittering it this way, when they saw him. He had come in, glanced about inquiringly and then come straight over to their table. She said, "They had pretended to be annoyed. 'The nerve of him!' they had said afterward, with well simulated amazement. But he had carried it off well. He had insisted he'd met 'Risby the last time he'd been in town and that she didn't remember him."

"That's the way with you girls," he had said, pretending to be chagrined. "Out of sight, out of mind." He had been talking to "Risby, but looking at Kay. She had, she remembered, looked rather well that day, in the red beret and new sweater suit, the one Monnie had given her for her birthday. Sixteen—she had been 16 in May.

Of course, she and "Risby had played for a long time at being sophisticated, bored with everything, women of the world, but she hadn't, until she met Chester Bigelow, actually appreciated the fact that she was almost a woman grown. Old enough for serious beaux, not just high school kids whose idea of a ray evening was to hop into a \$20 touring car with most of its parts missing and ride out to High Springs for a bowl of chili con carne.

CHESTER was different. Why wouldn't Mother understand about him? Kay had never, somehow, dared to bring him home. Not that Chester had showed any desire to be introduced, formally, to the family. Anyhow Kay had the feeling that would spoil everything. The romance would vanish if Monnie and Mother and Bill and Mark looked Chester over coolly.

So she met him downtown whenever his route brought him to Belvedere. Sometimes he rented a car and drove down. Kay was a bit afraid to go riding with Chester. If her mother heard—if Monnie saw them—if Bill happened to find out—! Not that it wasn't perfectly all right. Chester was "simply a peach" and all that, but the family wouldn't understand. Did families—ever?

Thus Kay. Now on this warm June afternoon she began to feel a trifle nervous about the whole affair. Chester was being insistent on seeing her that evening.

"But I can't possibly," she demurred. "We're having exams—all week. I'm up to my ears."

She thought of the classroom, warm, crammed with perspiring youths and maidens nibbling pencil points. Bess would be humming outside the windows, hovering over the Dr. Van Fleet roses which were the principal's particular pride and joy. The teacher of the moment would be hot, sarcastic, edgy.

"Oh, I hate it all!" she burst out, suddenly, surprised at her own earnestness.

"Not me, baby!" Chester, his dark eyes bold and smiling, pressed his arm close to hers.

"N-uo, not you." She smiled reluctantly. "Just school—this old town—all of it."

"Isn't that what I'm always telling you?" His slightly nasal voice, softened now, rushed over the words. "Aren't you wasting your time here when you might be doing something in the Big

Town? Lots of girls no older'n you are in the chorus. Fact is, they like 'em as young as they can get 'em. Maybe this time next year you'd be married to a millionaire if you tried it."

DANGEROUS talk this for pretty, poor, proud 16. Dangerous whispers for the small ears of Kay O'Dare who wasn't a "grind," who wasn't clever at her books, whose fortune was in her hycinthine orbs and her small twinkling feet.

She said slowly, "You're kidding me, Chester. I couldn't—I mean I wouldn't get over—"

He interrupted. "Baby, you're the money. What I mean, you could knock 'em silly in the front row. I've got a friend in show business—man like me gets around, you know—"

The voice purred on, softly, insinuatingly. Kay thought of Miss Mahon who was head of the English department, whose bitter, edged tone had cut into her consciousness that day.

"Miss O'Dare's notebook? But I didn't know Miss O'Dare had a notebook."

Kay had flushed scarlet, had stammered, hating herself, the teacher, everything! Was it her fault she wasn't braver? Not everyone could be! Well, she'd show them all some day, all these old cats and foxes all over town. She'd show them what Kay O'Dare could do. They'd see her name up in lights, they would. They'd boast, priming their lips, "Oh, yes, I know her, years ago—"

She'd cut them when she passed them in the street. She could see a high-powered car whirling down a glittering avenue—herself, slim, long-legged, wrapped in furs—chinchilla, maybe. A man in livery would slip down from the seat, rush around to hand her out.

SHE came back to earth, to the shimmer of the June afternoon, to Chester, moist but dapper, beside her.

"I—I've got to be running along. Mother will be wondering—"

"Aw, sweetness, don't be mean! Come on, we'll have a snack out at that place on the River Road. I've got the bus down at the garage."

Her eyes were wide, frightened. "I can't, honestly!" Was that Monnie she saw walking along on the other side of the street?

"We could dance, baby. Honest, I'm dying to dance with you. Bet you're a honey at it, aren't you?"

If it was Monnie, she was lost. She said in a whisper of haste, "I'll meet you at 5:30 at the corner of Main and Arverne—if I can. Good-by."

She fairly ran.

Of course she wouldn't go to meet him, she assured herself. That was just to get rid of him. She wouldn't dare to go out to one of those night places. Chester didn't know it—she had, of course, pretended to be more sophisticated than she was—but Kay had never been out after sundown with a man. Boys had taken her to parties but usually Bill had called for her afterward.

She wouldn't go. Chester would be angry, would call her a "bum report." She couldn't help it. And if he left Belvedere that night, as he had said he would, perhaps she'd never see him again. She felt a pang. Chester who held out these brave promises of the golden life for her in the big city!

Her mother met her with a worried expression. "Kay, someone's been calling you from the school. The office. You're to call back."

The voice of the principal's secretary answered her. "Miss O'Dare? Oh, yes, Mr. Bellamy particularly wants to see you before class tomorrow. Stop in, will you?"

She hung up, with hands that shook a little. So she had flunked. That was what it meant! She couldn't bear it—couldn't stand the pity and the sneers. She'd have to do something to get away. Chester!

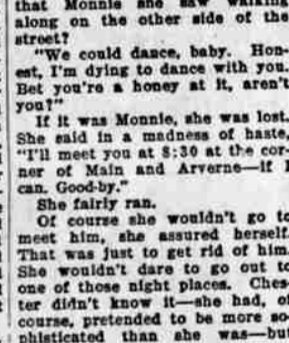
(To Be Continued)

Oratory at \$25 a page cost the taxpayers \$2100 for a recent issue of the Congressional Record. Now will those who have accused congressmen of being dumb please apologize?

Well, it certainly seems from testimony that Barker Charles E. Mitchell is one of those fellows who owes a lot to his wife.

Flapper Fanny Says

There's many a slip 'twixt the hope and the trip.



GLADYS OMA PARKER

OUT OUR WAY



THE QUICK TURNOVER

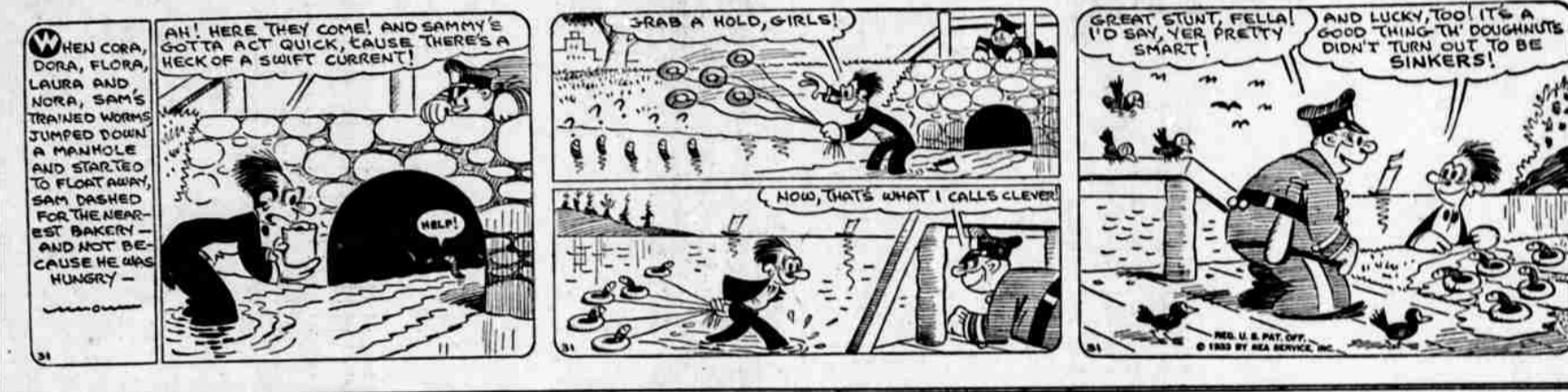
OUR BOARDING HOUSE

By J. R. Williams



OUR BOARDING HOUSE

SALESMAN SAM



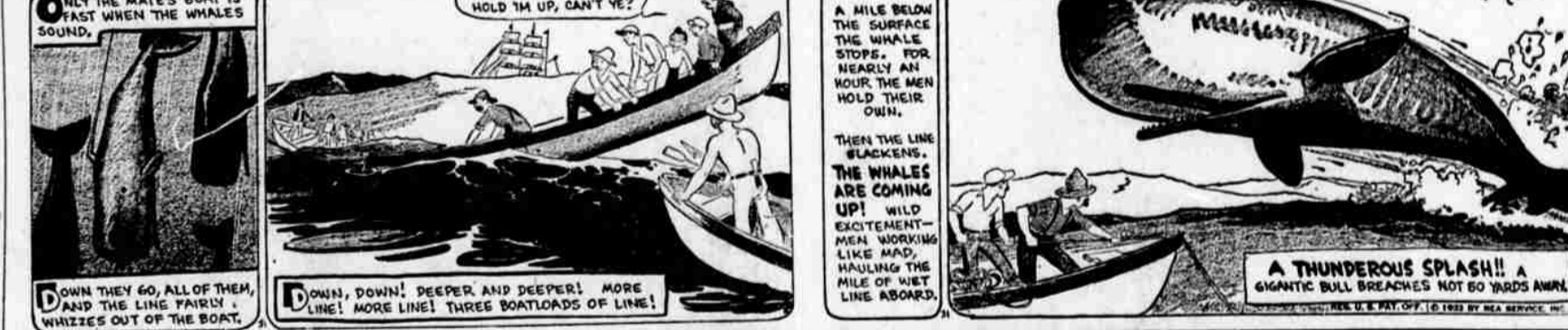
SALESMAN SAM

BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

WASH TUBS



WASH TUBS

FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS

THE NEWFANGLES—MOM'N POP



THE NEWFANGLES—MOM'N POP

By Ahern

By Small

By Martin

By Crane

By Blosser

By Cowan