

Darling Fool

By MABEL McELLIOTT

BEGIN HERE TODAY
MONICA O'DARE, 20 and beautiful, is in love with DAN CARLIGAN, heir to a local fortune. They are secretly engaged. BILL O'DARE worries his mother by planning to marry ANGLE GILLEN who has not yet got her divorce.

SANDRA LAWRENCE, who pretends to be Monica's friend, is trying to win Dan from her. Sandra discharges two servants and they try to kidnap her. She escapes. Dan's mother, who is planning a trip to a Wyoming dude ranch, Sandra is to accompany them. Dan finally is persuaded.

MISS JUSTICE CORBIN, an old friend of the O'Dares, inherits \$50,000 and asks Monica to go to Europe with her. CHARLES ECKHART, newcomer to town, pays Monica attention. She is not interested, waiting and waiting for a letter from Dan.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY
CHAPTER XXVIII

SANDRA said, "You've been awfully sweet to me, Danny. Her voice broke a little on the words. She was leaning against the fire place, the sweep of gray stone behind her throwing into high relief the perfect contour of her honey colored head. The flames from the big log fire showed in the blue velvet lining of the sofa she wore and Dan thought, quite idly, that she was a graceful picture. He was in riding clothes, casual and smartly western even to the big handkerchief knotted about his throat. They were alone—except for the Chinese servants. His mother and the rest of the party had gone to see a picture show at Benning, eight miles away.

"It's all right," he said rather awkwardly. "Glad to do anything I can. You had a rotten time of it and you've been a good little soldier."

"Do you honestly think so, Dan?" Her eyes shone. This was the praise she wanted above all else.

"Of course I do," Dan reflected that it was something of an effort, supplying Sandra with the moral courage she needed. Only this morning his mother had said to him firmly, "You're simply got to pour confidence into that poor nervous child, son. She's splendid but she had a shock and it's our duty to see her through this bad time."

Ever since the kidnaping Sandra had been having "bad headaches" and "wretched nights." It was not, she said with a charmingly patient smile, at all like her to go to pieces this way. The others agreed and pointed out how brave she had been through the dreadful experience itself. Now—well, Sandra needed Dan to lean on, needed him at her side when they rode. She seemed perfectly content, perfectly happy when he was murmuring in her ear, when they sat at table, side by side.

"You're awfully good for me," she would say softly with a side-wise glance at him. Dan felt, in a puzzled way, that he was committing himself to something without knowing what it was all about.

"Sure you didn't want to see that picture?" he said now, hoping to change the subject.

"No, honestly," Sandra said with pretty eagerness. "I'm perfectly content—perfectly—just to sit here and talk. Isn't it cozy?"

DAN agreed, stuffing his pipe and settling himself in the big leather chair opposite.

"Just like," giggled the girl in blue velvet, "just like old married folks!" She shrugged her shoulders and murmured delicately, "Honestly, Dan, I don't know what's got into me lately. I—somehow I seem to be changing. This time last year I thought of nothing but tearing around. I was in Monte Carlo in October—having the most wonderful time. And now—"

Dan prompted her. "And now what?"

"Well, I seem to be perfectly content with the simplest sort of things. Books and good friends—"

Her limpid gray eyes besought him to understand.

Dan, sensing dangerous ground, said gruffly, "What about Monte Carlo? Did you have a good time there?" Father wouldn't like us when we were there. Said it was a gambling hell and he didn't want us to go near it."

"Oh, Dan, how quaint!" Her laugh rippled. "I can't imagine—"

She broke off suddenly to say quickly that of course his father was a dear—so upright—so charming but Dan had to admit he was a bit old-fashioned.

"I'd love to show you the place," she said with enthusiasm. "Oh, the times I had on the Riviera last autumn! It was all too marvelous. There was a count who dashed me frantically. Honestly, Dan, I almost took him up. He was the best looking thing! And there were two Englishmen—don't you adore the British?" she broke off to inquire.

"Can't say I do," said the man. "Considering that my forebears came from County Sligo, I'm not so crazy about them."

"Well, I do—simply adore them. You're rather like an English country gentleman yourself, Dan. Big and taciturn—and handsome."

"Oh, cut it, won't you?" growled Dan, pleased in spite of himself. Sandra's light laugh rippled again. "I never saw such a boy," she declared. "Just a great big bear. That's what he is!"

DAN grinned, reflecting it wasn't so bad to have Sandra talk that way to him when there was no one else around. Honestly she was kind of cute when you got right down to it. Entertaining. And she didn't seem to have any moods—was always bright and charming. As his mother had said, Sandra had had a great many advantages. She could chatter French in a way to excite Dan's envy and alarm since he had never mastered the college course in the language. She imitated that her German was excellent also and that she managed to make herself perfectly understood in Italian. Dan wouldn't know about that. But it did seem that Sandra did everything well. She rode and swam—"like a streak," Dan said. She played a marvelous

game of contract. She could sing. She had taken tap dancing and fencing lessons in New York last year. No doubt about it, the man who married Sandra would have a beautiful and accomplished wife. That was the way Dan still thought of her—some other man's prospective wife. Never for an instant had he seriously considered her as his own.

She left his pulses unstirred. All her pretty ways, her exquisite clothes, her charming impetuosity were lost on him in that respect. As an employer he admired her performance quite impersonally. But it was Monica, he reflected, whom he really loved.

"She's so darned sweet," Dan thought to himself now, forgetting the beautiful girl here beside him in the intimacy of the

firelight, setting, all were lost on him.

"What did you say, Dan?"

"I—uh—I was just thinking." He tapped his pipe against the hearth, pretending it needed cleaning. Sandra gave him a swift, appraising glance. Then she said in a low voice, "There's something I've been wanting to talk to you about."

The man raised his eyes, watchful, guarded. "Shoot."

Sandra shrugged her shoulders. "It's just that, well, I like so our being friends that I hope a certain person won't misunderstand."

"Who'd you mean?"

SANDRA gave him a limpid look, all girlish ingenueness. "You big silly. I mean Monica, of course."

Dan drawled, "Why should Monica mind?" He had to be genuine by his guard now lest he give the whole show away. Sandra was not to know how he felt about Monica. Nor anyone else, for that matter.

Sandra drew her small feet in the gilt mules up under her.

"Well, of course, she's always been simply mad about you, dear boy, and you know it," she commenced in that relishing, judicial tone which somehow irked her listener.

"Rot!" he said crudely.

"Oh, I know there used to be something on your side, too! A boy and girl infatuation, I suppose. We've all had them," admitted Sandra. "It passes and we wonder why on earth—"

She paused and Dan, staring moodily at the flames, did not help her out.

"Monnie's a wonderful girl," he said gruffly, after a rather awkward pause.

"Don't I know it!" Sandra was all gentleness now. She seemed satisfied to have made her point. "She's hard working and good and quiet," said Sandra, damping her rival with the faintest possible praise. "But after all, Danny, you and I know you're not the man for her."

Dan, holding his temper in leash with an effort, asked why.

"Oh, I don't know," Sandra narrowed her eyes. "You want—well, more excitement if you ask me. And of course in a wife you want poise—experience. Poor dear Monnie is pretty, of course, but she's so frightfully unsophisticated. She's not going your way, you wild, big, bad man, you!"

Dan, hot, uncomfortable, stung with resentment he scarcely knew how to put into words and also by an annoying conviction that he was unequal to the situation was on the verge of saying something which would have, as he later told himself, "given the whole show away."

But just at that moment the group from the picture show broke in, talkative, hungry, tired. The Chinese boy brought sandwiches from the kitchen. They all sat around for an hour or two, chatting and laughing. There was no further opportunity for a tete-a-tete.

As the party broke up for the night Mrs. Carligan detained her son in the hall.

"My big boy's making me very happy these days," she said, her handsome, anticlastic face creasing itself into a smile. And then she struck dismay to Dan's heart by adding, "And he's making someone else very happy, too."

(To Be Continued)

A National Brake Code specifies that the stopping distance for 20 wheel brakes is as follows: 20 feet, excellent; 25 feet good; 35 feet, unsafe.

Germany is planning a dirigible service between Europe, North America and the East Indies.

Flapper Fanny Says

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It's the girl with a sunny disposition who gets burned up easily.

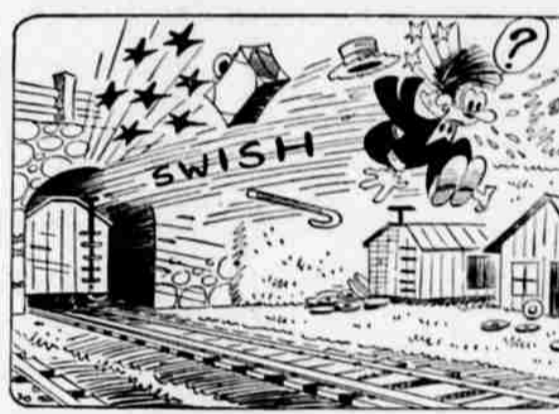
OUT OUR WAY

By J. R. Williams



SALESMAN SAM

By Smal



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

By Martin



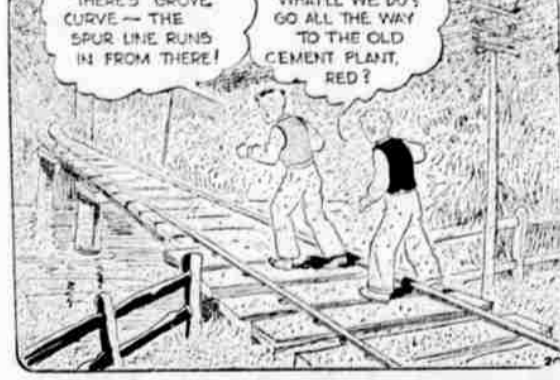
WASH TUBS

By Crane



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS

By Blosser



THE NEWFANGLES—MOM'N POP

By Cowan

