

Darling Fool

By MABEL McELLIOTT

BE IN HERE TODAY
MONNIE O'DARE loves DAN CARRIGAN, wealthy and handsome, who has just won with a party of friends, including the stern, SANHILA LAWRENCE. Sandra, pretending to be Monnie's friend, wants Dan for herself. His parents want him to marry Sandra and look down on Monnie because the O'Dares are poor. Monnie clerks in a drug store. Miss ANNETTE CARRIGAN, a friend of the family, inherits \$50,000 and asks Monnie to go to Europe with her. The girl hesitates, hoping for news from Dan. At last a letter comes but it is a disappointment. Dan's love seems to have cooled. Monnie, pleased, accepts Miss Annette's invitation. The day they leave Belvedere Dan rains.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY

CHAPTER XXX

It had been raining when Dan reached Chicago. Hard, cold, unfeeling rain, beating down on streets like black glass, making dazzling reflections in all the puddles. He sat moodily in the taxi which was hurrying him across town from one station to another. He'd been a fool to write that letter to Monnie, he told himself, when he was in that black mood two weeks ago. His mother had been "working on him" as she often did, whispering that he was to keep up the good work, devoting himself to Sandra because of Mr. Lawrence's approval depended all their future. After the talk with his father Dan was inclined to take her word for it. Dan knew as well as the next fellow how precarious business conditions were. He felt a slacker anyhow, off there enjoying himself while his father sweated at home over the bills.

Well, it hadn't been his own idea. He'd done it to please the family. Then, all hot and bothered, discouraged too, he had written to Monnie, telling her he thought they'd better not plan to be married in January. It was just a mood and moods pass. Person oughtn't to write letters when he felt that way. Curious that she hadn't answered. Dan would have sworn that Monnie would give you a comeback on a letter like that. Once she would have. He wondered what could have happened. Deep down he had a sneaking suspicion that one reason he'd written it was to get Monnie's answer, hurt, loving, assuring him she'd wait, asking what the trouble was. Didn't he care any more?

But he hadn't had a line—not a word. Dan had to write letters, himself. Somehow he never knew sure she would write him often. All this fortnight he had watched the mail, expecting every day to have a line from her. Then when the month had been up and she had still remained silent he had told still remained silent he had told his mother he was going to run on home ahead of the rest of them. He had been, all of a sudden, impatient to see Monnie. Mother hadn't wanted him to do it, had complained that Sandra would think it queer. Dan swore softly to himself. What did he care what Sandra thought? Sure, she was good looking, smart but she left him cold. Whereas Monnie—and here Dan's deep set eyes glowed—he was crazy about Monnie. There was something about her that caught at his heart, squeezed it. Maybe she was sick. Oh no, he assured himself, lighting a cigaret in the cab's stuffy darkness, no she was just sore. She'd been like this before about something he'd done.

He might wire. He might phone her long distance. Then he decided against that. In a small place like Belvedere news got around so easily. No, he'd wait until he saw her and could talk to her. That was the best way.

THE big terminal seemed chilly

and deserted. Dan strode along, glancing with casual interest at the little group of shawled immigrants huddled over their bags. It was a gloomy place. Gave him the shivers. Well, there wasn't long to wait. His train was already made up.

The wheels beat a tune into his brain. It was a tune he had danced to that last night at the Bar-A Ranch.

"Isn't it romantic, de-de-da-da-de-da-da-da-da-da?" Sandra had been humming the words, her head thrown back, those queer, heavy lidded gray eyes of hers on his face. Maybe Dan had held her a little tighter than necessary. He was, he told himself, doing everything to keep everybody happy. But as the wheels ground out the tune now he decided he wasn't going to have anything more to do with Sandra. It was the very dickens, being pulled this way and that—but that was all. If Monnie hadn't been around he might even have fallen in the way of being in love with Sandra. He admitted that. But as things stood—well, it was just too bad. Dan grinned in the darkness.

He raised the shade and peered out into the rainy night. Nothing but blackness out there and occasionally the blurred lights of a station as they flashed past. The train hooted eerily at a grade crossing. Dan wished he could sleep. Why was it he couldn't? Usually he dropped off the instant his head touched the pillow.

He knew what he'd do. First thing in the morning after he'd reached home and had a bath and shave and seen Dad he'd go see Monnie at the store. He'd surprise her—not even phone. Maybe she could go to lunch with him. They'd drive out the Springs way. Then he'd tell her he was sorry he'd been such a dope about this trip. She'd understand, of course, and everything would be lovely. Curious he should feel rather nervous about it all.

WHEN the train slowed into Belvedere the rain had stopped. There were quite a few people getting off. A football team coming to play the "Belvedere Stars." The up train was just pulling out. The tail end of it was visible, rounding the curve. Dan didn't even look to see if he knew any one on the platform, but ran for old Nate Billip's taxi and hurried his bag into it.

He talked a lot to old Nate, partly because he wanted to hear his own voice after the long trip alone, partly because he liked the old fellow.

Yes, the west was great. Dan said. Fine country—wonderful people—but it was good to get home. He grinned at old Nate as it shared a secret. Maybe Nate would be driving his—Dan's—children some day, he reflected. Little girls with bronze curls blowing and sturdy little boys with blue eyes. Nate would call to take them to dancing school. "Or maybe Monnie will have a little car of her own," Dan day-dreamed. "By that time, maybe I can swing it."

Because, of course, when they married he wouldn't have the roadster the family supplied him with. No, they'd be sore at his marriage—especially his mother. She'd say he'd double crossed her and he hadn't at all. He'd just had to keep it quiet because of the way she felt about everything. Well, she set him around. She'd have to! Dan set his lips grimly.

The maid who opened the door to him told him his father was at breakfast. The older man looked up, surprised, as Dan breezed in. "Where'd you drop from, son?" Dan grinned. "Thought I'd loafed too long. The rest of them will be back day after tomorrow. I got restless."

"Well, well!" Dan thought his father looked older, more tired. There were two deep lines between his eyes.

"How're things?"

"Oh, fair." Mr. Carrigan drank his coffee. "The bank renewed that note of mine—30 days. Hope to see my way clear after January first. Good of you, son, to do as I asked about this trip. It meant a lot to me."

DAN smiled. "I had a fine time. Dad, only I thought I ought to be back here with you."

"It's going to be all right. I feel sure of it now." And yet his father didn't look as if he meant it. He got up heavily. Dan thought he'd aged in the past few weeks.

"How are your mother and the girls?"

"Oh, rarin' to go! They're fine," Dan said lightly.

"Sandra better?"

"She's great. She snapped out of it and had a good time."

"I'm glad to hear it. Lawrence was anxious about her."

Dan was impatient now to be up and away. "Guess I'll clean up and be down at the office later."

His father put his arm across his shoulders. "Fine. We can have lunch together."

"Yes. Uh—maybe."

He broke away. He had an irresistible temptation to telephone to Monnie. Let's see—it was nine o'clock. She would be at the store by this time.

He gave the number, sat drumming on the table, waiting. "Miss O'Dare?" His face went blank. "Where'd you say? Oh, I see. I see!"

He stood up, looking dazed. There was something queer here. That boy had said Monnie had gone away. That sounded like "abroad." But that was crazy. She was right here in town. Somebody was playing a practical joke on him. After he'd washed up he'd run around and see her mother, ask her what it was all about.

Kay O'Dare met him at the door, smartly dressed in blue. She stared when she saw him. "Oh, hello."

"Some idiot down at the store said Monnie'd gone away," Dan blurted out. "It isn't true, is it?"

Kay gave him a cool glance. "She's sailing for Europe with Miss Corey tomorrow," she told him. "They left for New York this morning on the 8:30."

(To Be Continued)

SALEM, Ore., (UP)—Machine age has not affected agriculture as much as many other industries, but it has been felt. Each agricultural worker in 1932 cared for an average of 26 acres of land, compared to 26 acres in 1910 and 15 in 1920.

Flapper Fanny Says



Outdoor girls are always picking up a lot of pointers.

OUT OUR WAY

By J. R. Williams



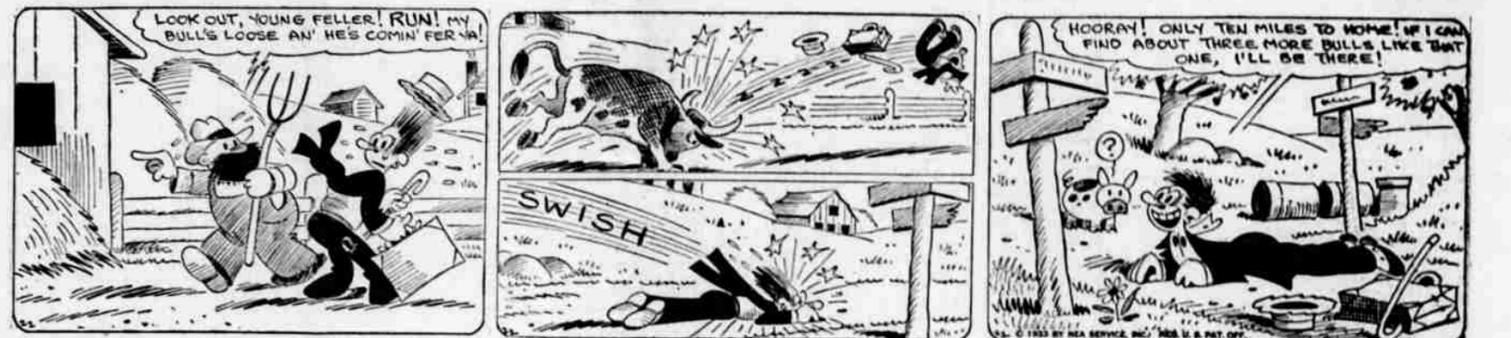
OUR BOARDING HOUSE

By Ahern



SALESMAN SAM

By Small



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

By Martin



WASH TUBBS

By Crane



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS

By Blosser



THE NEWFANGLES—MOM'N POP

By Cowan

