

Darling Fool

By MABEL McELLIOTT

BEGIN HERE TODAY
MONNIE O'DARE returns from a trip to Europe to find **DAN CARDIGAN**, with whom she had long been in love, seriously injured in an automobile accident. Moreover, just before the accident Dan had married **SANDRA LAWRENCE**, who, pretending to be Monnie's friend, had been trying to win him from her. Sandra had even told Dan that Monnie intended to marry **CHARLES EUSTACE**, another admirer.

Dan's father asks Monnie to come to the hospital. The day after following Monnie tries to pick up her life anew. She lives with her mother, sister and two brothers. The O'Dares have little money. Monnie works in a doctor's office.

Monnie is disturbed because Charles, although one of her best friends, seems cool toward her. Unhappy and unsettled, she decides to marry **ARTHUR MACKENZIE**, rich, middle-aged New Yorker whom she met on her trip. Mackenzie comes to see her. A little later the same evening Charles arrives. Obviously unwell, he stays on, refusing to leave before the other man. At length Mackenzie departs. Monnie tells Charles he has behaved unacceptably. He declares she is not going to marry Mackenzie.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY
CHAPTER XLVII
THEY stood there, fuming at each other. The man, tall and lean and straight, his eyes darkened with something very like fury. The girl, small, golden, in a dress of some thin soft stuff, her head thrown back, defying him.

Kay, coming to the door of the living room, stared for a moment. Then comprehension dawned in her eyes and, unseen by both combatants, she slipped away.

"What business is it of yours whom I marry?" Monnie O'Dare repeated defiantly.

Charles Eustace, two steps below her on the narrow flight of stairs, smiled ironically. She was so lovely in her anger. He did not answer and this enraged Monnie further.

"It's none of your affair!" she snarled hotly. "You don't care what happens to me, anyhow. You never did."

"Ah, don't!" Charles' irony was marked now. Folding his arms and leaning against the balustrade, he considered this. "What makes you think that?"

Monnie was trembling with anger and excitement. She did not even bother to answer his question.

"Treating me as you have the past few weeks," she pursued, following some grievance of her own. "Coming to the office today and speaking to me so—so—" her voice broke indignantly on the words but she found it again after a moment.

"Then to come here tonight—to behave so badly—showing all of us just what a frightful opinion you have of me!"

CHARLES interrupted this tirade to ask coolly, "What makes you think I have a bad opinion of you?"

"You used to be my friend," Monnie rushed on, quite as if he had not spoken. "You used to be so—well, really wonderful. Last summer—last spring."

"Ah, yes. But that was then," the young man reminded her cryptically.

"I wasn't any different," Monnie reproached him. "I was the same. What's changed you?"

Charles shook his head, almost sadly.

"You're not changed? And yet you're going to marry this fellow?"

"He's fine and honorable and good," Monnie defended her absent suitor. "He'll take care of me as I want to be taken care of. Anyhow, it can't possibly concern you. You and your—your Confessa!"

She fairly flung the title at him. Charles, whitening under the attack, could not help smiling.

"My Confessa? I don't know what you're talking about."

"Oh, don't you? Didn't you fight a duel for her last year, didn't she break your heart? There, she didn't care how she hurt him. She wanted to. He deserved it!"

In an instant Charles' strong fingers were gripping her arms. He was looking down at her with an expression of amusement and impatience.

"You little fool," he said in a caressing voice which took the sting from the words. "You—darling—little fool."

Suddenly Monnie was limp in his arms, was sobbing against his shoulder. Tenderly Charles lifted her, streaming face.

"I'm sorry. You know I didn't mean that." He was no longer arrogant but strangely humble. "You know how I feel about you, Monnie O'Dare."

SOMEHOW, Monnie never knew exactly how although later she tried hard to remember, they were sitting side by side on the shabbily carpeted stairs. Charles' big handkerchief, smelling of tobacco and a faint whiff of cologne, was in her hands.

"My Confessa, as you call her," the young man was saying very gently, "was a beautiful and very heartless young woman who led me a paco for a time. I didn't 'track up' over her. I was a

weak to begin with and finding out what a shell she was just put the crowning touch on me."

"You were in love with her then," Monnie accused, feeling weak as water at the thought.

"I was—well, fascinated," explained Charles, patiently. "I was ill—not quite bright in the head, I imagine. When I found out what she was really like—using me as a stalking horse for her own purposes—I went a little gaga. I came back home, hating life, hating everybody. Then—"

She prompted him. "Yes, then?"

"I met you," Charles told her. "You know this—you must know it, Monnie. I've been in love with you from the start."

Did she know it. At any rate it was sweet to hear him say the words. They were what her heart had been hungering for. In all the world there seemed to be only this tall young man with the fine head and the purposeful voice.

"I knew where I stood with you," Charles went on. "I know how you felt about—him."

Monnie shivered. Had she, indeed, forgotten Dan already? No, this was something quite different from what she had felt for Dan Cardigan. All that old love and longing had been mixed up, somehow, with her thwarted and poverty-stricken girlhood. Hadn't there been, in all of it, some desire to "show" Belvedere? Had she wanted Dan for what he stood for? No—she told herself passionately. It wasn't that. She had really loved him with a girl's love. She had set her heart on him. They hadn't even in the least suited to each other. Their marriage would have been a disaster. But opposition had made their infatuation only stronger. With her new, sharply matured viewpoint she saw all this.

Something of all this she tried to tell her lover, haltingly.

"It's not that I've forgotten Dan," she said loyally. "I never shall. He belongs to my youth—"

CHARLES, wanting to laugh at her young solemnity in this, took her two small hands in his own and said gravely:

"I never dared before to ask you if I had a chance, because of Dan. When he was alive I felt you were wholly his. And after he died, well, then, I was afraid you had dedicated yourself to his memory. You were almost like a nun, remote, spiritual. It was only after I discovered this Mackenzie chap was in the running again that I decided I might have a chance. But you were so stiff—so unapproachable—"

She drew herself up at this, pretending to be angry.

"It was you who were stiff. And all that talk of the girls you went about with, the parties—"

Charles laughed, in delight. "Jealous little cat!"

"I'm not!"

After an interval of murmuring, Monnie straightened, saying in a scandalized tone: "Do you realize what time it must be? Mother will think we're quite mad."

He helped her to her feet and she swayed against him.

"What am I going to say to Arthur when he calls?" she wailed, perplexed. "Oh, Charles, I was going to be so cool, so wise! I was going to do wonderful things for the family with Arthur's money. Why can't I be like that? My heart always runs away with my head."

"Don't worry about that." His tone was so odd that she twisted about to stare at him.

"What do you mean?"

"My dear," demanded Charles, striking an attitude. "Don't you realize you're marrying a blooming capitalist?"

"You're joking." She really thought he was. He was a young man of taste and elegance, of course, but no money. Not much, that is. Or so she had always thought.

"Wait and see," he told her mysteriously. "Perhaps I'm not the beggar boy you thought."

And then they forgot all about such mundane matters. For the moment, at least.

(To Be Concluded)

It required 22 years for 20,000 men to build the Taj Mahal at Agra, India. It is the tomb of Mumtaz Mahal, favorite wife of Shah Jahan, the great Mogul of Delhi.

A pigeon's first two eggs never hatch.

Flapper Fanny Says

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OUT OUR WAY



HELPING HANDS.

OUR BOARDING HOUSE



JUST BEFORE THE SUGAR BOWL WAS THROWN.

SALESMAN SAM



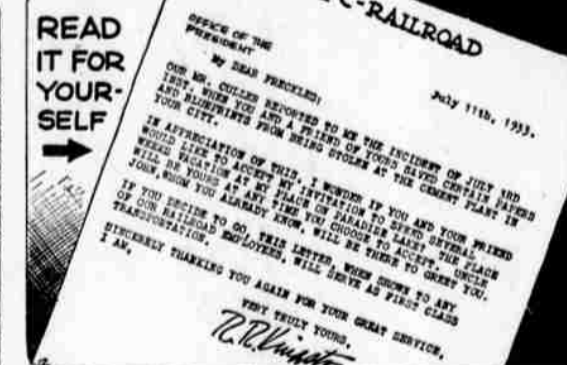
BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES



WASH TUBBS



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS



THE NEWFANGLES—MOM'N POP



By Small

By Martin

By Crane

By Blosser

By Cowan