

# You can be confident that its quality never varies

# "SALADA"

# TEA

"Fresh from the gardens"

## APRIL ESCAPADE

By KATHLEEN NORRIS

### SYNOPSIS

Mary Kate O'Hara is in love with Cass Keating and wants to marry him. But she also wants to help her brother, Martin, who is studying medicine at night and who has had to turn down an opportunity to go to Germany because of the family's poverty. Then Christopher Steynes, a friend of her employer, makes a strange proposition. He asks her to play the part of his wife for a day and a half in order to discourage a Russian countess who is on his trail. It means enough money to give Martin his opportunity, and Steynes seems perfectly trustworthy—a gentleman. Mary Kate promises to think it over.

### CHAPTER XI—(Cont'd.)

Tess and Regina had to be torn from the fascinations of the story of the Spite Wall to run off to "nine." All the children would listen to their mother indefinitely when she was in reminiscent mood. Fed by Mary Kate's questions she would linger by the sink for quarter hours together, wiping the immaculate drain boards and scoured zinc absent-mindedly, while she relived the days and ways of generations long dead.

At twelve o'clock on this particular Sunday morning, Mary Kate had come down the stairs a very picture of youth and beauty and smartness, and Cass, respectfully sitting on the edge of a chair in the now spotless kitchen, somewhat timidly making small talk with a surprisingly friendly hostess, had risen to meet his sweetheart with a rather doubtful question.

"Could Mary Kate and I go for a little walk, Mrs. O'Hara?" To which Mary Kate's mother had amazed him by responding heartily: "Oh, go along with you, the both of you! You'll be doing nothing now but giving us all the slip, I wouldn't wonder."

"Gee, she's kind. What's happened?" the dazed Cass had lost no time in asking Mary Kate, once they were alone.

"Oh you know Ma! Mary Kate had answered impatiently. "She was on tenterhooks yesterday, for fear it was all broken off between you and me. If you could have heard her you'd think I was the one that made all the trouble! She kept telling me what a fine fellow you were and how many a girl had lost her happiness playing fast and loose with a man, and all that. She had me almost crying."

"Well, and now won't she expect me to say anything? I mean are we engaged?" the bewildered Cass had pursued determinedly.

"And now it was Mary Kate's turn to be a little contrary.

"Oh, yes, of course we are!" she had said carelessly.

"Well, but—we are engaged?" "Well, we're househunting, anyway! Why must we fuss so much about everything?" But she had given a jump of general satisfaction in the spring day, her companion, and the expedition, that had afforded him little consolation.

"Let's hunt houses every Sunday until we find what we want!" A faint cloud.

"Mr. Rountree may want me to go to Sacramento next week-end, Cass."

"Since when?" "He was talking about it yesterday."

"You've never been there, have you?"

"Oh, never!" "Gee," Cass said, thinking, "I wish I could get away and go down with you."

"Mother'd love that," the girl observed, with suddenly cold hands and a thumping heart.

"Where do you go?" "Thursday, I guess."

"Oh, well, I couldn't go then!" To her great relief he seemed satisfied, it was a natural enough thing. Hundreds of San Francisco's business men made the trip to the capital once or twice monthly. Mary Kate breathed normally once more. But it had been a bad moment.

The hour was one of rapturous excitement. In every obviously-enamored young couple that passed them, they saw themselves. Baby coaches and toddling little citizens in white coats had a new meaning this morning. And especially were the new big apartment houses, rising tiers of bright, clean empty windows, street littered with bricks and planks, filled with new charm.

Cass gave Mary Kate his hand to help her over precarious bridges of joists and boards, and they peeped yet plastered or painted.

"Imagine, Cass, what a view!" "Wait. Does this room belong to this apartment, or to the next one?"

They stepped through what would soon be walls; walls shutting one man's home from another. Mary Kate was ecstatic over breakfast angles, open fireplace, casement windows.

"Here's where my apron would hang. This would be our room, this the sitting-room, and you see we could have little flower-pots all along here."

The miracle of it smote them.

"Cass, isn't marriage wonderful?" "I'll say it's wonderful!"

"I mean, think of you and me—always together. Mart and Tom and us, but then going away, and leaving us together."

"I know." "And then—oh, maybe having a place in San Mateo some day, Cass. I mean, if everything goes right. And have cars."

"We'll have a car!" "I mean—in ten years we'll have so many memories," she said wistfully.

"I'll say it's wonderful!" he said ineloquently, again.

They looked at a terrible dark apartment, that wouldn't do at all. They looked at one seven-room one, ridiculously roomy and high-priced. The man who showed it to them mentioned the rent as eighteen hundred, and Cass made Mary Kate laugh by saying politely that he had not intended to buy the building.

Wandering, wandering, wandering happily along, they got far from home, way up into Stanyan and McAllister street neighborhood near the park. Mary Kate loved the idea of living near the park.

In the park the band was playing in still, warm, afternoon sunshine, and thousands of persons were ranged on the beaches, under the plane trees, or lying on the green slopes of grass, and with babies and newspapers scattered about them.

"Want to go into the Museum?" "Oh, my feet!"

"Mine too." Mary Kate sat down on the young green grass, and Cass threw himself down next to her, and they listened to the Poet and Peasant together. The girl quite unconcernedly took off her tight little helmet of a hat, and ran her fingers through the blazing red-gold of her silky hair. Passersby looked at her.

The music strayed through the fragrant air unevenly, now fanned by an idle scrap of breeze, now fading away.

"I'm sunk," said Mary Kate suddenly.

"Me too," Cass rolled on an elbow. "This househunting is a job," he said.

"Here's what we ought to do, Cass. We ought to go home, and I'll clean up and change my clothes, and you go home and do the same. Then come back to supper. Ma has a chicken pie. I know, because she was making puff paste this morning, and then we can either go down to Loretta's or to a movie."

"Check!" Cass said, stirring reluctantly. "We skip lunch?"

"You had that hot dog?" "I know. Well, yes, that's all right."

One evening "Dinner at six and we'll eat from now. Come on!" In his own magnificent way he stepped a tunic, and Mary Kate gave a gasp of content as she sank into the seat.

"Well, anyway, we didn't quarrel!" she exclaimed.

"Quarrel?" "Don't you know you always quarrel, when you get tired and hungry and dirty, and begin to discuss plans? Why, bringing us back from picnics, or the circus, my mother says we always used to get crying and scrapping and one of us would cross the street and walk along there, all alone, and somebody else would jump off the dummy the minute we all got on."

This aloud. But in her panicky heart she was saying, "Shall I tell him? Shall I ask him whether it would be all right for me to do what Mr. Steynes wants me to do?"

And in her heart she was answering: "No, he'd go crazy. He and Mart and Mother all would. They'd say he was just bluffing me, just trying to take advantage of me. Its all only—fun. I'm no baby, to be deceived, to be gotten 'into trouble.'"

She remembered the pencilled sum. She remembered Christopher Steynes saying, "Now listen no smart cracks about not wanting the money, when I give it to you," and her own surprised, "Why else do you think I'm doing it for?" and his friendly laugh.

### CHAPTER XII.

Life, last Sunday, with a steady rain falling, and Cass Keating engaged to go over and spend the day with his aunt in Oakland, had been quiet, empty, dull, unsatisfying. But life today was thrilling and throbbing with possibilities and excitement.

It was good, after this happy, strangely emotional day, to get back to Mother's peaceful kitchen, and find Mother placidly shelling early peas. Tom, working over the radio, was completely occupied and content. His dark face was absorbed, his big, dirty hands clever and gentle with wires and connections.

"Strong? I'll fix it so it'll blow you out of the kitchen, Ma," he promised.

This horrifying threat found Mrs. O'Hara unalarmed. Her big black sheep was safe with his mother, busy and happy, and she was content. But more than that, as she hastened to inform Mary, hadn't Doctor van Antwerp sent for Martin, and asked him to go with him to a medical lecture, and have dinner first at the doctor's apartment?

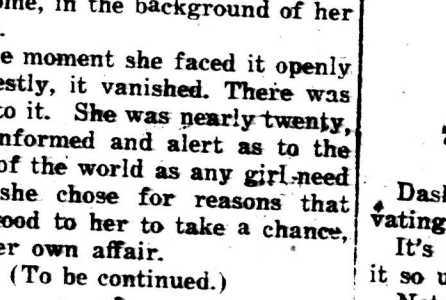
"He's going to Germany with Doctor van Antwerp!" Mary Kate said over and over again in her own soul, when she heard this bit of information.

And through the happy, safe home evening the determination strengthened. What did Christopher Steynes want her to do, after all, that such a fuss should be made about it? Play a part, for twenty-four hours, save him from a situation that was not of his own creating, and return home safe and sound to tell the family of her daring and her adventures.

While she was laughing and talking at the family dinner table, and later, when she and Cass went to a movie, and sat with their hands locked, and their shoulders touching, half-stupified by darkness and music, and the flowing story on the screen, she was conscious of the week-end plan as only a sort of menacing shadow, vaguely troublesome, in the background of her thoughts.

But the moment she faced it openly and honestly, it vanished. There was nothing to it. She was nearly twenty, and as informed and alert as to the dangers of the world as any girl need be. If she chose for reasons that seemed good to her to take a chance, it was her own affair.

(To be continued.)



2679

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A LOT FOR A NICKEL

ISSUE No. 42-30

Families miss of life by not together. Fat business; Mother attending con bo's have their "dates" what he want to getting ac other. Members of kindred tastes same things. Showing daughter Son would n'er a few steps would relish a tion journey to Family fun i nor elaborate. gathering arou family meal, or reading a b church together. ing together, ta The trouble i ed doing some important. Wa a hurry. It wo off business. Mother would shorten the aid what precie cter traits wo fibre of growing home years we good times.

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