

FORTUNE'S FOOL



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BEGIN HERE TODAY
Colonel Holmes, soldier and adventurer, returns to England, his native land, when war with Holland is declared. His Grace of Buckingham hires Holmes to subdue the beautiful actress, Sylvia Farquharson. It is dark when the Colonel carries her to the house Buckingham has rented.

Upon their arrival Holmes is horrified to see that Sylvia is an old sweetheart. The servants of the Duke render the Colonel unconscious. When Buckingham attempted to embrace Sylvia, her dress falls from her throat, revealing a purple blotch, token of the plague.

The Duke and his servants flee. Holmes nurses Sylvia and saves her life. When Holmes catches the plague Sylvia nurses him back to life. Holmes deems himself unworthy of Sylvia and leaves her. He goes to call on his old landlord.

NOW GO ON WITH THE STORY
HE vintner pursed his lips and sadly shook his head, regarding his guest the while from under bent brows.

"Why, sir," he said, "there's no French shipping and no ships bound for France at Wapping, and mighty

few ships of any kind. The port of London is as empty as Proctor's yonder. There's not a foreign ship'll put into it, nor an English one go out

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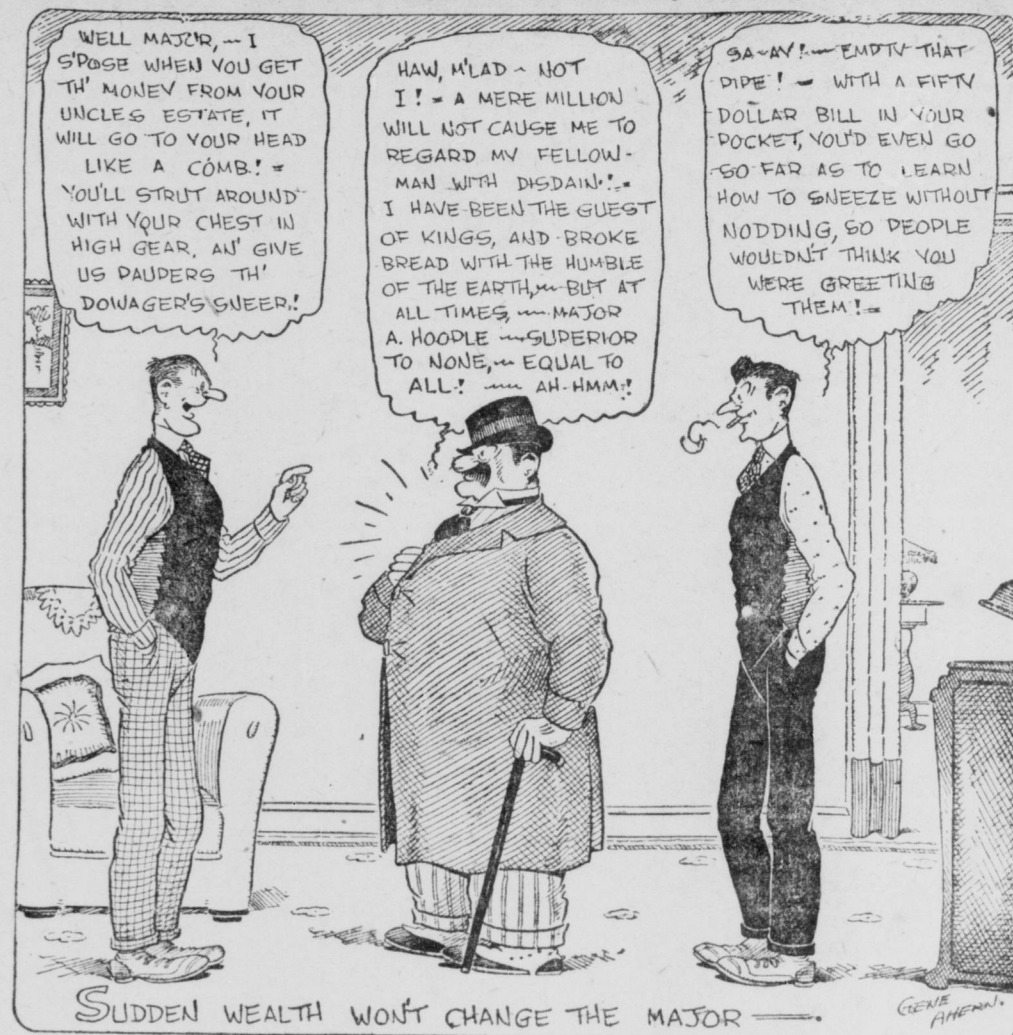
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OUR BOARDING HOUSE—By AHERN



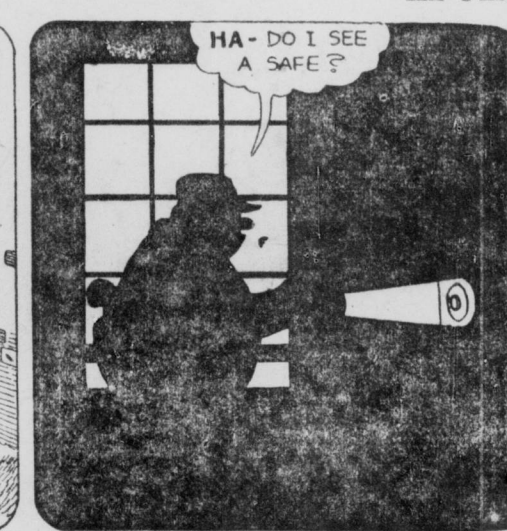
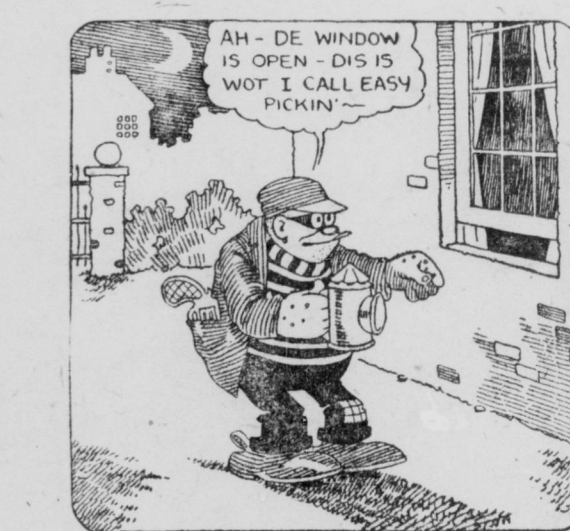
BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES—



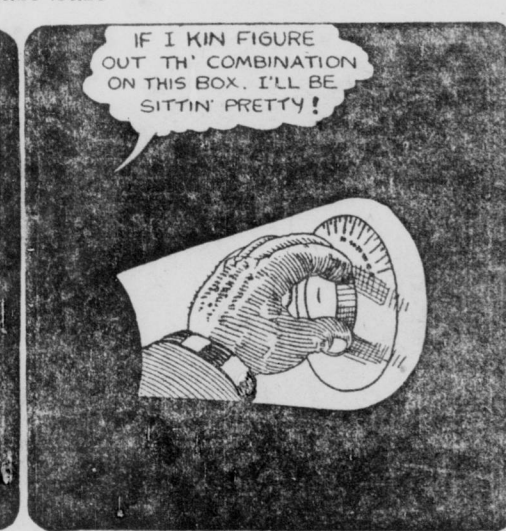
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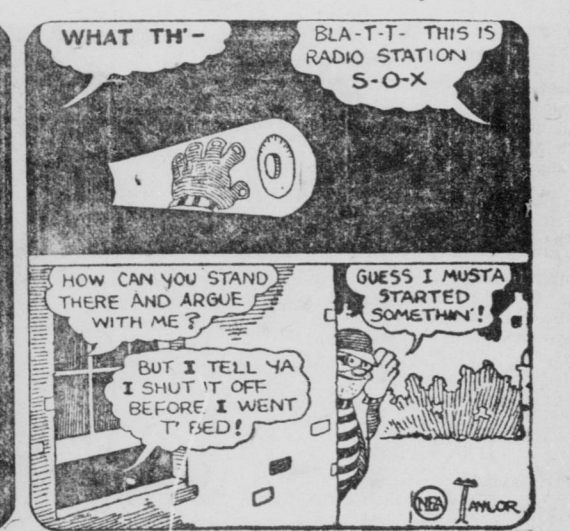
MOM'N POP—



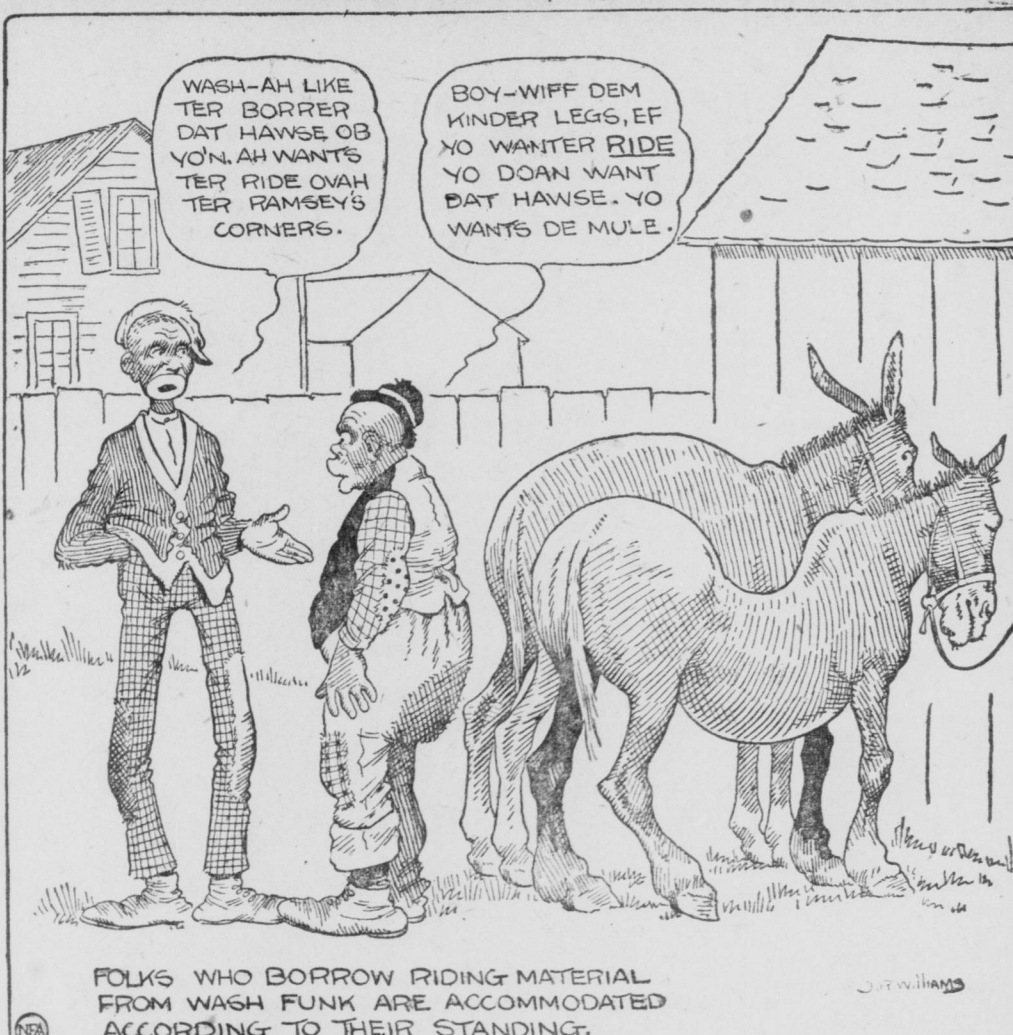
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FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS—By BLOSSER



leaving Holmes no single doubt of the thing his grace was fearing. The humor of it took Holmes sharply, and his laugh rang out further to startle the Duke.

"There's no need for electricity against me," he assured his grace. "I am certified in health and carry no infection. I left Bunhill Fields this morning."

"What?" Albemarle was astounded. "Dye mean ye've had the plague?"

"That is the whole reason of my being here. I am a safe man now, and I came in answer to your proclamation asking for safe men."

Albemarle continued to stare at him in deepening amazement.

"So that is what brought you?" he said at last, when full understanding came to him.

"But for that I certainly should never have come."

"Maybe, maybe," said his grace briskly. "But what matters now is that you are here, and that command ye yours if you still wish it. It is an important office, as I told you, and so that you discharge its duties, as I know you will, it may prove but a deepening amusement."

"What do you say?"

"Say?" cried Holmes, his cheeks flushed, his gray eyes gleaming. "Why, I give you thanks with all my heart."

"Then you accept it? Good! For I believe you to be the very man for the office." Albemarle stepped to his writing table, selected from among some documents a parchment bearing a heavy seal, sat down, took up a pen and wrote briskly for a few seconds. He dusted the writing with pounce, and proffered the document.

"Here, then, is your commission. How soon can you sail?"

"In a month," said Holmes promptly. "A month!" Albemarle was taken aback. He frowned. "Why, man, you should be ready in a week."

"Myself, I could be ready in a day. I mean to take this new-found tide of fortune at the floor, and . . ."

But Albemarle interrupted him impatiently.

"Don't you realize, man, the time that has been already lost? For four months now this office has stood vacant."

"Which means that there's a very competent lieutenant in charge. Let him continue yet awhile. You see, it may be that I shall have a companion, who cannot possibly be ready in less than a month."

With ad odd, reckless trust in the continuance of Fortune's favor now, he boldly added: "You have said that I am the very man for the of-

fice. The government can wait a month, or you can appoint some one less likely to serve it as efficiently."

Albemarle smiled at him grimly across the table. "Ye're full of surprises today, Master Randall. And this one baffles me."

Holmes poured out his tale and Albemarle gave him a sympathetic hearing. When he had done, the Duke sighed and turned aside before replying, to examine the pages of a notebook at his elbow.

(Continued in Our Next Issue)