

Daily Short Story

THE HANDICAP

PAULA looked at the sea gulls. "I shan't look at the man again," she was firm with herself. But she wanted to, the worst way. He was tall, his dark hair, grayed a little over the ears, face strong and seamanly. Not a ladies' man. But a man! Paula couldn't bear it.

Talking to Cousin Irene, but looking at Paula.

Paula felt as if great flowers were blossoming inside of her. She looked at the sea gulls. Life seemed to be like this, that when she found such a man as this, Cousin Irene had to be sitting on a bench with him, her dark eyes vividly following every little move he made, her great eyes beseeching him for love, for him.

But as luck would have it. Paula found herself, when they were seated at the table under the rose trellis, directly across from the man. He still talked to Cousin Irene. All the guests raised a great chatter of talking, none bothering about Paula. Paula only was filling in. Some one had sent last-minute regrets.

So Paula had a chance to notice that, for all his amiable conversation, the man's eyes wandered now and then abashedly down the green terraces to the blue lace of the Sound.

TWICE Paula lowered her eyes. But hastily when he suddenly shifted his glance to her. And it was at her that he smiled, when Aunt Madge, whose smile was all for Cousin Irene, invited him to stay at the house while he had his yacht at Goldport.

"We'll give you a party, Tom," Aunt Madge offered, smiling with all her new teeth. But he refused.

Aunt Madge hid her teeth with a weight of sympathy. "Such a shame," she sighed, "that a wife can cause a man such sadness." Paula looked at the sea gulls. So he had a wife.

"It isn't that," she heard him say diffidently. "I just don't care for the fanfare any more. I'd like to come here often, if you'll let me be just one of the family."

"Then," said Cousin Irene, archly, "come back for lunch tomorrow."

"I'd like to." Paula quit looking at the sea gulls. Even if he had a wife and even if Cousin Irene adored him anyway, Paula could smile and let him know that she wished he could be happy. He smiled back. Then Aunt Madge spoke very, very sweetly:

"PAULA, dear, I know you're anxious to get back to your lovely sewing!" And to the others, "Paula's sewing is simply divine!"

The next day at lunch time, needless to say, Aunt Madge sent no invitation to come down. Instead, she sent a dress to the sewing room to be mended at once.

And Paula, stitching, had to be careful to let none of the tears fall on the soft silk.

Charitably, her mind roamed back over the trail that had brought her to this little workroom in the great mission. It led from a demure little house in a town named Hillview, in Indiana, from a gallant and resourceful little mother, who seemed always to have a thimble on her middle finger.

"As rich as your Aunt Madge Dennisin," she would say, as other people would say, "As rich as Croesus."

"Mummie, tell about Aunt Madge's house at Goldport."

And mother would describe marbled porticos, broad gardens, "and a ballroom almost as big as the First Methodist Church."

"Mummie, where is Goldport?" "Near a very large city, dear, named New York."

WHEN mother had influenza, and died, a telegram came from Goldport for a Paula who was 20.

"It's a great opportunity," cried the minister's wife. But Paula hesitated.

If, as the message urged her to do, she closed out the little dress-making business that had been mother's and could now profitably be hers, and went to Goldport to live, "I'd have the handicap of being a poor relation in a rich home. And I'm accustomed to independence, and it's a good thing to have, even with poverty."

"But it's your father's dear half-sister who is asking you to live with her!"

Paula wondered. No help had ever come for mother from Goldport. The minister's wife had something else to say, though.

"These are the only relatives you have in the world," she pointed out. "And it would certainly be improper for such a beautiful young girl as you to be living alone."

Arriving then at Goldport, Paula met luxury that awed her. She couldn't understand why Uncle Phillip, a neatly jolly little man of 50, took the Oriental rugs and the painted ceilings as matters of course. "I say, we'll show you off at the Shellfish Club tomorrow," he said at once. And Cousin Irene, a vivid, nervous, little brunette, said, "Dad, let's give her a luncheon at the Yacht Club!" But Aunt Madge rebuked them in dovelike sadness.

"PAULA is in mourning," she said, and to Paula. "Out of sorrow for your dear mother, I'm sure you'll prefer to be left to yourself." Paula swallowed tears. Aunt Madge looked solicitous. "To avoid brooding, dear, you might like to occupy yourself with a bit of sewing."

The young girl grasped this opportunity to show her gratitude to her father's half-sister, who smiled as kindly as anybody could with a face so nearly like that of a hawk.

"Tomorrow, then, dear, the butler will show you where the sewing room is. You can do a little sewing for me and Irene. And you can fill in whenever one of our guests sends last-minute regrets. I'm sure you want to make yourself useful."

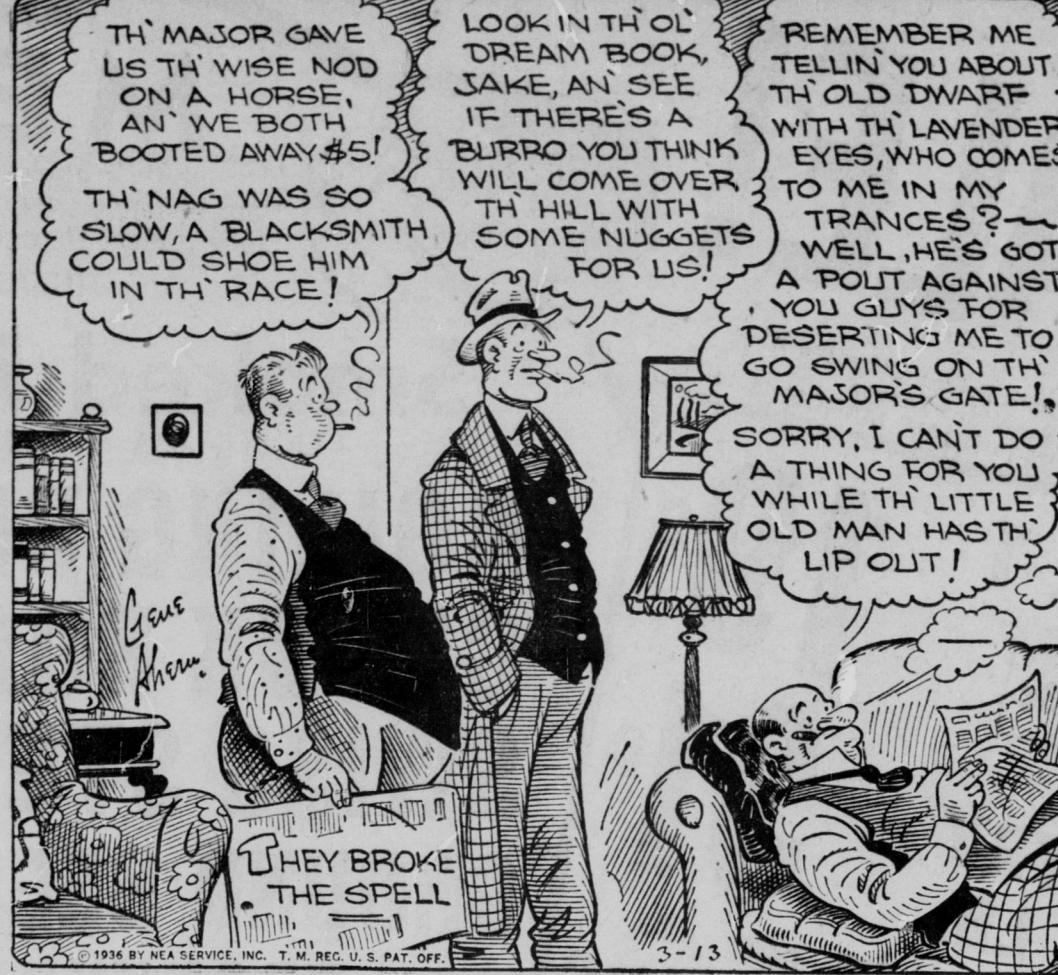
"I'll be glad to help in any way I can, Aunt Madge."

So eight months passed. Then Aunt Madge arranged the great ball for her cousin Irene's birthday. And though time could not dim the memory of her mother, Paula had come out of her mourning.

"I want you to have me at least one dance," twinkled Uncle Phillip one morning, Paula having been summoned to the library to repair

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

—By Ahern



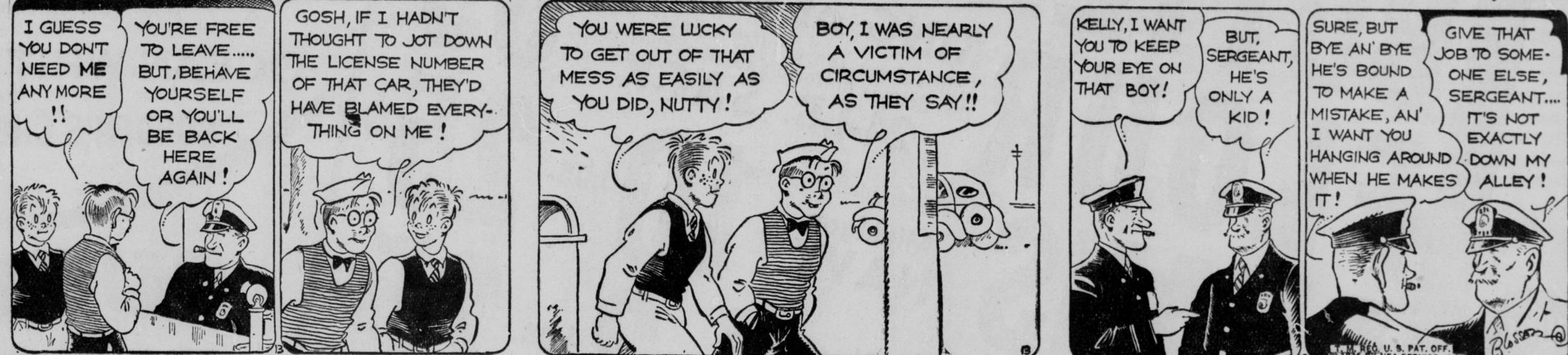
OUT OUR WAY

—By Williams



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS

—By Blosser



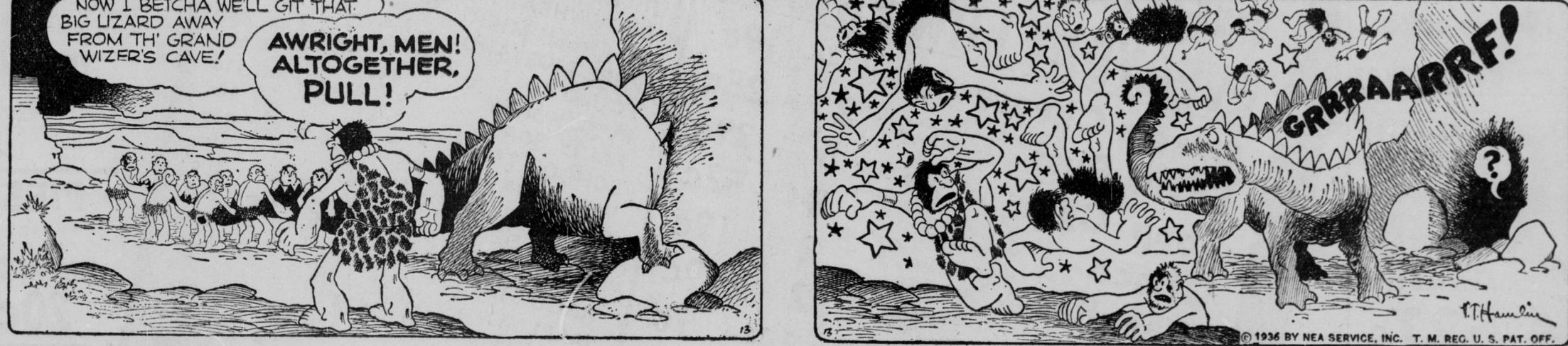
WASHINGTON TUBBS II

—By Crane



ALLEY OOP

—By Hamlin



BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

—By Martin



THE TARZAN TWINS

—By Edgar Rice Burroughs



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While Doc was trying vainly to persuade Paabu to bring weapons, two gruff Bagalla warriors came and took Bulala away to be slain for the fiendish cannibal feast. His departure was a bitter blow to the boys, for they had come to have a real affection for the big, amiable black.

Now Doc called Paabu into the hut. "Look," he whispered, and drew his knife from his loincloth. Paabu jumped back, for he feared the "big medicine" which Doc had used in his sleight-of-hand tricks. "I will give it to you," Doc said; "and you will be a witch-doctor."

Paabu leaned forward eagerly. "But first you must bring the weapons," Doc demanded. After a short silence, the black boy answered: "I bring!" "Abattoy!" the American lad exclaimed gleefully. But there was still small cause to cheer. He was traveling a dangerous path!

THE END.