

THE AMERICAN HOUSE

By Virginia Chase

MY father was a doctor and proud of his calling, but he liked to fancy himself a businessman as well. The secret of good bargaining, he used to assure us, lay in detecting latent possibilities. So, in making his rounds in our little Maine village, he was forever spotting something—a woodlot, a blueberry pasture, once even a chalk pond—and hurrying off to buy it before anyone could get ahead of him. The rush was quite unnecessary, for he seldom had a competitor and, once the property was his, never an insistent buyer. But this did not deter him.

Late one March afternoon in the year 1909 my mother and I were alone in the sitting room, waiting for him to come home from his office. She was sewing and at the same time helping me with my arithmetic.

"If five times two is ten, then five must go into ten twice. Can't you see that, Lucy?" she said.

"Yes, Mama." But I couldn't quite.

My mother was a very handsome woman. She had thick, chestnut hair, which she twisted into a Figure Eight, and dark eyes with heavy brows and lashes. Her figure was slight and trim. "Surely these three big girls can't belong to you," strangers often protested when they met her. We girls used to get a little tired of hearing it. But not my father. He beamed as though every time were the first. As though it were a compliment to him, really. My mother herself had no vanity, nor did she allow us girls to develop any. "If you behave as well as you look," she used to say. Though she had a way of not finishing some of her sentences, she always made her meaning clear.

"Then if five times three is fifteen," she went on.

"Here's Papa," I said, grateful for the interruption. "He's coming up the driveway." He wasn't wearing any gloves, I noticed, and his overcoat was unbuttoned. Ordinarily my father had no patience with people who exposed themselves.

I FROWNED smugly, catching his eye. But he didn't seem to get my meaning. He came right on through the stormhouse and into the entry. "I heard some news today," he said.

"What was it?" my mother asked, looking up. News was rare in our village, especially at this season.

"The American House is for sale," he told her. "The whole place, fully equipped, for \$1500." The American House was the village hotel. It had been closed for almost two years.

"Oh," my mother said, looking disappointed. She had obviously hoped for something more. That a patient had paid a bill in cash, maybe. "I can't imagine who would buy it," she went on. "If ever there was an eyesore."

The American House was a monstrosity. Built of frame and painted a bilious yellow, it rose bluntly above our low, gabled dwellings. The front was bad enough. This had a covered piazza, shading the lower floor like a visor; then three rows of windows, looking bare and shameless without any blinds; and a



Illustrated by George Scarbo.

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roof, like a high forehead. But viewed from any other angle the place was a geometric nightmare. "Eyesore!" my father protested from the doorway. "Why, it's a first-class bargain."

My mother gave him a quick glance. "No one in town knows the first thing about running a hotel," she said.

"All it takes is a little efficiency," he assured her, turning to hang up his coat.

A red spot had appeared on each of my mother's cheeks. "You look tired," she said. "Your practice is getting more than you can handle."

He crossed the room, touched me lightly on the head in passing, and sat down in the wicker rocker by the window. It crackled under his weight. "Oh, I'm not so busy," he answered lightly.

MY mother put down her sewing. "That place needs a lot of repair, inside and out," she said. "Anyone who bought it would have to lay out a good deal of money."

"I've got \$2500," he told her. I looked closely at my mother. Her cheeks were flaming, but she spoke without losing her composure. "It's every cent you have in the world," she reminded him. "As long as it is in the bank..." She had begun to sew again, and her needle was flying.

"What's the good of idle money when you can invest it at 10 per cent?" he demanded. Actually money meant nothing to him. He never carried more than a handful of change.

My mother sighed. The chalk pond had been bad enough and the woodlot that had turned out

to be 20 miles from a highway. But a hotel. That hotel. "If any place ever had a history," she said.

My father must have been remembering that. "We wouldn't even have to go inside it," he promised. "I know where I can get a manager on a co-operative basis. With him there the place would run itself."

My mother frowned over her stitches. "It isn't just its reputation," she said. "It's the prospects. No one has ever made a go of it since the mines closed." "Maybe no one has made a go of it," he granted. "But times have changed. Think of the tourist trade. The road from the Junction is going to be graveled, and by summer automobiles will be coming through here every day."

Our nearest city was the Junction, 15 miles to the east. Two trains passed through it every day. Its sidewalks were paved and its streets were lighted with gas. It had a hotel and two drugstores. The Court House was there, and the County Jail. You could often see as many as five automobiles on its streets at the same time, some bearing banners of cities as remote as 40 miles.

"With that new road, we'd have more business than we could possibly handle," he continued. "Why, it's a sure thing."

She sighed again. She was beaten and she knew it. "I suppose you will go ahead," she told him. "But I am not going to have anything to do with any hotel," she added with a vehemence that was not native to her. "That one, of all places!"

(To Be Continued)

Our Boarding House

With Major Hoople



Boots and Her Buddies



Freckles and His Friends



Red Ryder



Wash Tubbs



Alley Oop



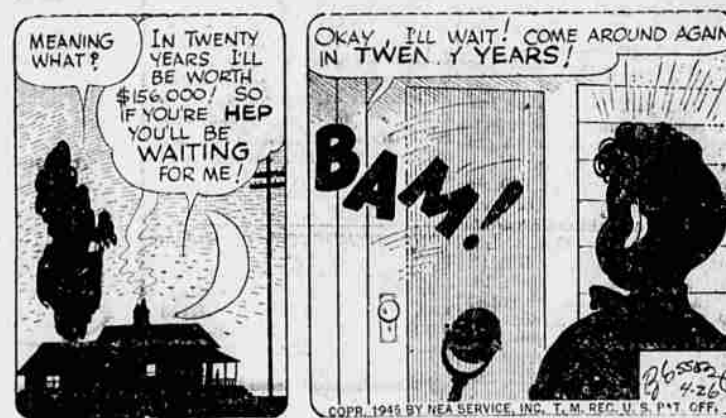
Out Our Way



By Edgar Martin



Merrill Blosser



Fred Harman



By Leslie Turner

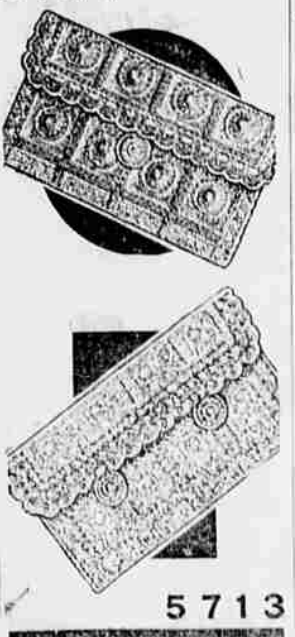


By V. T. Hamlin



Corde' Bags

5744



5713

By MRS. ANNE CABOT
Crochet them in white or pastel to wear with your cotton hot-weather street dresses and your printed rayon crepe afternoon and "date" frocks. Bag in upper illustration is 13 1/2 by 17 1/2 inches and requires 6 spools of cordette each containing 75 yards. Or it may be crocheted of one large spool of tuxedo, obtainable in your department store. Bag in lower illustration is about the same size but is a lot more elaborate and makes a splendid dress-up bag.

Washington Merry-Go-Round

(Continued from page four)

And the unfortunate fact is that this probably has played into the hands of the Russian generals who are needing Stalin. Russian History May Repeat Information as to what goes on inside Russia is always difficult, but there has been increasing suspicion of late that Stalin does not control his own generals. This is what has happened repeatedly in Russian history. When the generals don't themselves, in war time, they dominated the czar. And today, the men who, once were strong in the Soviet have much less to say. Ex-Foreign Minister Litvinov, a great believer in international cooperation, is now completely out of the picture. Foreign Minister Molotov has less authority. The generals, in turn, are considered responsible for the previous policy of having a messenger-boy ambassador who they could easily control at San Francisco. Also, it is strongly suspected that they inspired Stalin's demands that the U. S. 9th army retire from the Berlin suburbs on April 13 so the Red army could enter first. Tragedy is that some U. S. war chiefs, by going over the White House heads, are strengthening the Red general's hand. The Russians are a suspicious people anyway. They have been made more so by being shot up by us in the diplomatic cloud. When we refuse to recognize a nation as a member of international society, naturally that nation does not get the rebuff easily.

For Warm Days



8853

By SUE BURNETT
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Pattern No. 8853 is designed for sizes 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 years. Size 2, dress, requires 1 1/2 yards of 3 1/2 inch fabric; panties, 1 yard; bonnet, 1/2 yard. 3 yards for the trimmings.
For this pattern, send 26 cents in coin, your name, address, size desired, and the pattern number to Sue Burnett, La Grande Evening Observer, 709 Mission St., San Francisco, Calif.
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Official Records

Water turned off April 24.
O. S. Hobson, 1406 Bain Street
Water turned on.
O. S. Hobson, 1422 Monroe Avenue

Building Permits

George W. Brown, erect new storehouse garage, 2106 Walnut street, \$50.