

ALICE ADAMS

by BOOTH TARKINGTON

Second novel in the Times series by Indiana writers
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WALTER, usually sallow, had grown pale; he watched his father narrowly, and now took a sudden resolution. "Look here," he said. "Will you say Lamb's is likely to fire me because you're here? And you talk like the people that have to be locked up. I don't know where you get such things in your head; Lamb and Company won't know you're gone. Listen: I can stay there long as I want to. But I'll tell you what I'll do: make it worth my while and I'll hook up with your old glue factory, after all."

Adams stopped his pacing abruptly, and stared at him. "Make it worth your while?" What do you mean?"

"I got a good use for \$300 right now," Walter said. "Let me have it, and I'll quit Lamb's to work for you. Don't let me have it and I swear I won't."

"Are you crazy?"

"Is everybody crazy that needs \$300?"

"Yes," Adams said. "They are if they ask me for it, when I got to stretch every cent I can lay my hands on to make it look like a dollar!"

"You won't do it?"

Adams burst out at him. "You little fool! If I had \$300 to throw away, besides the pay I expected to give you, haven't you got sense enough to see I could hire a man worth \$300 more to me than you'd be? It's a fine time to ask me for \$300, isn't it. What for? Rhinestone buckles to throw around on your 'girl friends'? Shame on you! Ask me to bribe you to help yourself and your own family!"

"I'll give you a last chance," Walter said. "Either you do what I want, or I won't do what you want. Don't ask me again after this, because—"

Adams interrupted him fiercely. "Ask you again!" Don't worry about that, my boy! All I ask you is to get out o' my room."

"Look here," Walter said, quietly, and his lopsided smile distorted his vivid cheek. "Look here; I expect you wouldn't give me \$300 to save my life would you?"

"You make me sick," Adams said, in his bitterness. "Get out of here."

Walter went out, whistling; and Adams drooped into his old chair again as the door closed. "Oh, my, my," he groaned. "Oh, Lordy, Lordy: The way of the transgressor—"

CHAPTER XVI

HE MEANT his own transgressions and his own way; for Walter's stubborn refusal appeared to Adams just then as one of the inexplicable but righteous besetments he must encounter in following that way. "Oh, Lordy, Lordy!" he groaned, and then, as resentment moved him—"That dang boy! Dang idiot!" Yet he knew himself for a greater idiot because he had not been able to tell Walter the truth. He could not bring himself to do it, not even to state his case in its best terms; and that was because he felt that even in its best terms the case was a bad one.

Of all his regrets the greatest was that in a moment of vanity and tenaciousness, twenty-five years ago, he had told his young wife a business secret. He had wanted to show how important her husband was becoming, and how much the head of the universe, J. A. Lamb, trusted to his integrity and ability. The great man had an idea; he thought of "branching out a little," he told Adams confidentially, and there were possibilities of profit in glue.

What he wanted was a liquid glue to be put into little bottles and sold cheaply. "The kind of thing that sells itself," he said: "The kind of thing that pays its own small way as it goes along, until it has profits enough to begin advertising it right. Everybody has to use glue, and if I make mine convenient and cheap, everybody'll buy mine. But it's got to be glue that'll stick; it's got to be the best and if we find how to make it we've got to keep it a big secret, of course, or anybody can steal it from us. There was a may here last month; he knew a formula he wanted to sell me, 'sight unseen' but he was in such a hurry I got suspicious, and I found he'd managed to steal it, working for the big packers in their glue-works. We've got to find a better glue than that, anyhow. I'm going to set you and Campbell at it. You're a practical, wide-awake young feller, and Campbell's a mighty good chemist; I guess you two boys ought to make something happen."

His guess was shrewd enough. Working in a shed a little way outside the town, where their cheery employer visited them sometimes to study their melodious tests, the two young men found what Lamb had set them to find. But Campbell was thoughtful over the discovery. "Look here," he said. "Why ain't this just about yours and mine? After all, it may be Lamb's money that's paid for the stuff we've used, but it hasn't cost much."

"But he pays us," Adams remonstrated, horrified by his companion's idea. "He paid us to do it. It belongs absolutely to him."

"Oh, I know he thinks it does," Campbell admitted, plaintively. "I suppose we've got to let him take it. It's not patentable, and he'll have to do pretty well by us when he starts his factory, because he's got to depend on us to run the making of the stuff so that the workmen can't get onto the process. You better ask him the same salary I do, and mine's going to be high."

But the high salary, thus pleasantly imagined, was never paid. Campbell died of typhoid fever, that summer, leaving Adams and his employer the only possessors of the formula, an unwritten one; and Adams, pleased to think himself more important to the great man than ever, told his wife that there could be little doubt of his being put in sole charge of the prospective glue-works. Unfortunately, the enterprise remained prospective.

Its projector had already become "involved into another side-line," as he told Adams. One of his sons had persuaded him to take up a "cough-lozenge," to be called the "Jalamb Balm Trochee," and the lozenge did well enough to amuse Mr. Lamb and occupy his spare time, which was really about all he had asked of the glue project. He had "all the money anybody ought to want," he said, when Adams urged him; and he could "start up this little glue side-line" at any time; the formula was safe in their two heads.

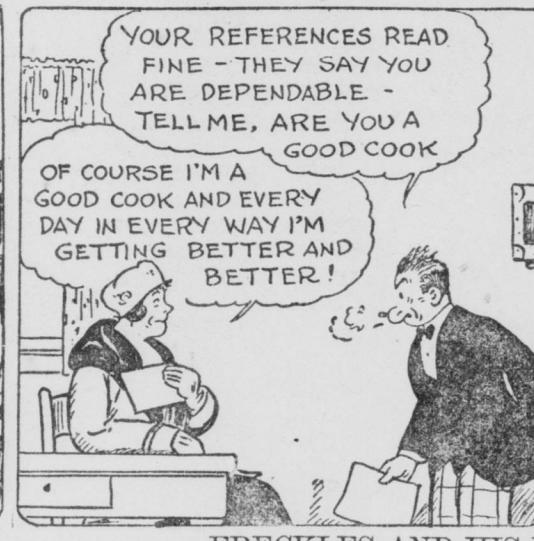
"No. Making it. Sort of a glue-

DOINGS OF THE DUFFS—



OUT OUR WAY—By WILLIAMS

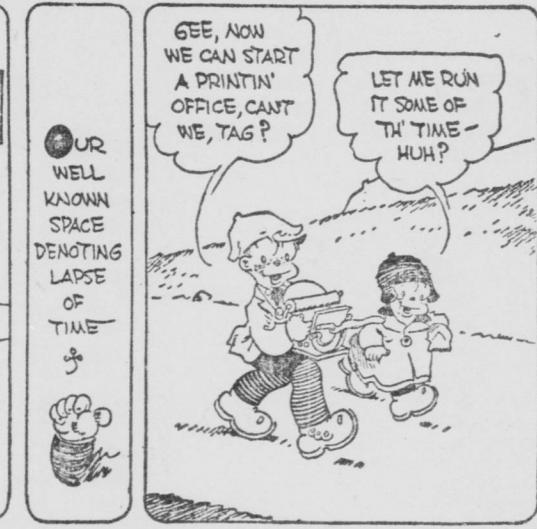
Another Prospect



FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS—By BLOSSER

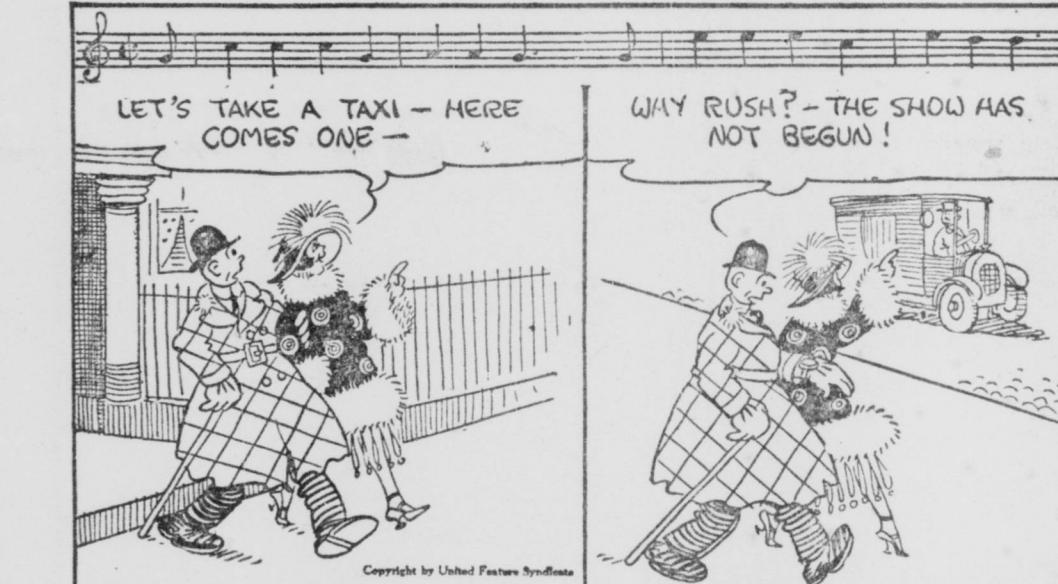


IT'S THE NEXT THING TO SKATING



THEM DAYS IS GONE FOREVER—

Manhandle This On-Your Marimba—By AL POSEN



THE OLD HOME TOWN—By STANLEY



OUR BOARDING HOUSE—By AHERN



THE WOODEN PAIL DISPLAY, IN FRONT OF THE RACKET STORE, WAS TOTALLY WRECKED BY A STRANGE DRIVER, WHO LOST CONTROL OF HIS HORSE AT THIS BUSY CORNER TODAY-



THE MAJOR 'CARRIES ON' ABOUT CARRYING BUNDLES—By AHERN

works likely...

Lohr continued to frown. "Let me place how you and that man—le's see, wasn't his name Campbell, that died of typhoid fever? Yes, that was it, Campbell. Didn't the ole man have you and Campbell workin' sort of private on some glue proposition or other?"

"Yes, he did," Adams nodded. "I found out a good deal about glue, then, too."

"I remember," said Lohr. "He never said anything about it that I know of; but seems to me I recollect

we had a sort of rumor around the place how you and that man—le's see, wasn't his name Campbell, that died of typhoid fever? Yes, that was it, Campbell. Didn't the ole man have you and Campbell workin' sort of private on some glue proposition or other?"

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"Yes. Kept it in my mind and studied out new things about it."

Lohr looked serious. "Well, but see here," he said. "I hope it ain't anything the ole man'll thing might infringe on whatever he had you do for him. You know how he is: broad-minded, liberal, free-handed man as walks the earth, and if he thought he owed you a cent he'd sell his right hand for a pork chop to pay it if

that was the only way; but if he got the idea anybody was tryin' to get the better of him, he'd sell both his hands, if he had to, to keep em from doin' it. Yes, at 80, he would." Not that I mean I think you might be tryin' to get the better of him, Virg. You're a mighty close ole codger, but such a thing ain't in you. What I mean; I hope there ain't any chance for you to use me to change and improve a lot different from the one Campbell and I worked on for him."

"Well, that's good," said Lohr. "Of course you know what you're up to; you're old enough, God knows!" He laughed ruefully. "My, but it will

seem funny to me—down there with you gone! I expect you and I both been gettin' to be pretty much deadwood in the place, the way the young fellows look at it, and the only one that'd miss either of us would be the other one! Have you told the ole man yet?"

"Well—" Adams spoke laboriously. "No, No, I haven't. I thought—well, that's what I wanted to see you about."

"To Be Continued."