

# ALICE ADAMS

by BOOTH TARKINGTON

Second novel in the Times series by Indiana writers

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"It's better to have too much than too little," her mother mother said cheerfully. "We don't want him to think we're the kind that skimp. Lord knows we have to enough, though, most of the time! Get the flowers in water, child. I bought 'em at market because they're so much cheaper there, but they'll keep fresh and nice. You fix 'em any way you want. Hurry! It's got to be a busy day."

She had bought three dozen little roses. Alice took them and began to arrange them in vases, keeping the stems separated as far as possible so that the clumps would look larger. She put half a dozen in each of three vases in the "living-room," placing one at each end of the mantelpiece. Then she took the rest of the roses to the dining-room, but she postponed the arrangement of them until the table should be set, just before dinner. She was thoughtful, planning to dry the stems and lay them on the table-cloth like a vine of roses running in a delicate design, if she found that the dozen and a half she had left were enough for that. If they weren't she would arrange them in a vase.

She looked a long time at the little roses in the basin of water, where she had put them; then she sighed, and went away to heavier tasks, while her mother worked in the kitchen with Malena. Alice dusted the "living room" and the dining room vigorously, though all the time with a look that grew more and more pensive and having dusted everything, she wiped the furniture, rubbed it hard. After that, she washed the floors and the woodwork.

Emerging from the kitchen at noon, Mrs. Adams found her daughter on hands and knees, scrubbing the bases of the columns between the hall and the "living room."

"Now, dearie," she said, "you mustn't 'ire yourself out, and you'd better come and eat something. Your father said he'd get a bite downtown today—he was going down to the bank—and Walter eats downtown all the time lately, so I thought we would rather set the table for lunch. Come on, sis, we'll have something in the kitchen."

"No," Alice said, dully, as she went on with her work. "I don't want anything."

Her mother came closer to her. "Why, what's the matter?" she asked, briskly. "You seem kind of pale, to me; and you don't look—you don't look happy."

"Well—" Alice began, uncertainly, but said no more.

"See here!" Mrs. Adams exclaimed. "This is all just for you! You ought to be enjoying it. Why, it's the first time we've—entertained in I don't know how long! I guess it's almost since we had that little party when you were eighteen. What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing. I don't know."

"But, dearies, aren't you looking toward this evening?"

The girl looked up, showing a pallid and solemn face. "Oh, yes, of course," she said, and tried to smile. "Of course we had to do it—I do think it'll be nice. Of course I'm looking forward to it."

## CHAPTER XX

HE was indeed "looking forward" to that evening, but in a cloud of apprehension; and, although she could never have guessed it, this was the simultaneous condition of another person—none other than the guest for whose pleasure so much cooking and scrubbing seemed to be necessary. Moreover, Mr. Arthur Russell's premonitions were no product of mere coincidence; neither had any magical sympathy produced them. His state of mind was rather the result of rougher undercurrents which had all the time been running beneath the surface of a romantic friendship.

Never shrewder than when she analyzed the gentlemen, Alice did not let him when she said he was one of those quiet men who are a bit flirtatious, by which she meant that he was

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