

# ALICE ADAMS

by BOOTH TARKINGTON

Second novel in The Times series by Indiana writers.

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"YES," Mrs. Palmer said, dryly. "It seems to me I've heard somewhere that other young men have gone there 'almost every' She doesn't last, apparently. Arthur's gallant, and he's impressionable—but he's fastidious, and fastidiousness is always the check on impressionableness. A girl belongs to her family, too—and this one does especially, it strikes me! Arthur's very sensible; he sees more than you'd think."

Mildred looked at her hopefully. "Then you don't believe he's likely to imagine we said those things of her in any meaning way?"

At this, Mrs. Palmer laughed again. "There's one thing you seem not to have noticed, Mildred."

"What's that?"

"It seems to have escaped your attention that he never said a word."

"Mightn't that mean—?" Mildred began, but she stopped.

"No, it mightn't," her mother replied, comprehending easily. "On the contrary, it might mean that instead of his feeling it too deeply to speak, he was getting a little illumination."

Mildred rose and came to her. "Why do you suppose he never told us he went there? Do you think he's—do you think he's pleased with her, and yet ashamed of it? Why do you suppose he's never spoken of it?"

"Ah, that," Mrs. Palmer said, "that might possibly be her own doing. If it is, she's well paid by what your father and I said, because we wouldn't have said it if we'd known that Arthur—"

She checked herself quickly. Looking over her daughter's shoulder, she saw the two gentlemen coming from the corridor toward the wide doorway of the room; and she greeted them cheerfully. "If you've finished with each other for a while," she added, "Arthur may find it a relief to put his thoughts on something prettier than a trust company—and more fragrant."

Arthur came to Mildred. "Your mother said at lunch that perhaps you'd—"

"I didn't say 'perhaps,' Arthur," Mrs. Palmer interrupted, to correct him. "I said she would. If you care to see and smell those lovely things out yonder, she'll show them to you. Run along, children!"

Half an hour later, glancing from a window, she saw them come from the hothouses and slowly cross the lawn. Arthur had a fine rose in his buttonhole and looked profoundly thoughtful.

CHAPTER XXI

THAT morning and noon had been warm, though the stirrings of a feeble breeze made weather not flagrantly intimate; but at about 3 o'clock in the afternoon there came out of the Southwest a heat like an affliction sent upon an accursed people, and the air was soon dead of it. Dripping negro ditch diggers whooped with satires praising hell and hot weather, as the toasting shovels flickered up to the street level, where sluggish male pedestrians carried coats upon hot arms and fanned themselves with straw hats, or, remaining covered, wore soaked handkerchiefs between scalp and straw.

Clerks drooped in silent, big department stores; stenographers in offices kept as close to electric fans as the intervening bulk of their employers would let them; guests in hotels left the lobbies and went to lie unclad upon their beds; while in hospitals the patients murmured querulously against the heat, and perhaps against some noisy motorist who strove to feel the air by spitting it, not troubled by any foreboding that he, too, that hour next week, might need quiet near a hospital. The "hot spell" was a true spell, one upon men's spirits; for it was so hot that, in suburban out-skirts, golfers crept slowly back over the low undulations of their club lands, abandoning their matches and returning to shelter.

Even on such a day, sizzling work had to be done, as in winter. There were glowing furnaces to be stoked, liquid metal to be poured; but such tasks found seasoned men standing to them; and in all the city probably no brave soul challenged the heat more gamely than Mrs. Adams did, when, in a corner of her apartment and fiery kitchen, where all day long her hired African immune cooked fiercely, she pressed her husband's evening clothes with a hot iron. No doubt she risked her life, but she risked it cheerfully in so good and necessary a service for him. She would have given her life for him at any time, and both his and her own for her children.

Unconscious of her own heroism, she was surprised to find herself

rather faint when she finished her ironing. However, she took heart to believe that the clothes looked better, in spite of one or two scorched places; and she carried them upstairs to her husband's room before increasing blindness forced her to grope for the nearest chair. Then trying to rise and walk, without having sufficiently recovered, she had to sit down again; but after a little while she was able to get upon her feet; and, keeping her hand against the wall, moved successfully to the door of her own room. Here she wavered; might have gone down, had she not been stimulated by the thought of how much depended upon her—she made a final great effort, and floundered across the room to her bureau, where she kept some simple restoratives. They served her need, or her faith in them did; and she returned to her work.

She went down the stairs, keeping a still tremulous hand upon the rail; but she smiled brightly when Alice looked up from below, where the woodwork was again being tormented with superfluous attentions.

"Alice, don't," her mother said, "You do all that this morning and it looks lovely. What's the use of wearing yourself out on it? You ought to be lying down, so to look fresh for tonight."

"Haden't you better lie down yourself?" the daughter returned. "Are you ill, mama?"

"Certainly not. What in the world makes you think so?"

"You look pretty pale," Alice said, and sighed heavily. "It makes me ashamed, having you work so hard—for me."

"How foolish! I think it's fun, getting ready to entertain a little again, like this. I only wish it hadn't turned so hot; I'm afraid your poor father'll suffer—his things are pretty heavy, I noticed. Well, I'll do him good to bear something for style's sake this once, anyhow!" She laughed, and coming to Alice, bent down and kissed her. "Dearie," she said, tenderly, "wouldn't you please slip up stairs now and take just a little teeny nap to please your mother?"

But Alice responded only by moving her head slowly in token of refusal.

"Do," Mrs. Adams urged. "You don't want to look worn out, do you?"

"I'll look all right," Alice said huskily. "Do you like the way I've arranged the furniture now? I've tried all the different ways it'll go."

"It's lovely," her mother said, admiringly. "I thought the last way you had it was pretty, too. But you know best; I never knew anybody with so much taste. If you'd only just quit now, and take a little rest—"

"There'd hardly be time, even if I wanted to; it's after 5—but I couldn't, really. I couldn't. How do you think we can manage about Walter—to see that he wears his evening things, I mean?"

Mrs. Adams pondered. "I'm afraid he'll make a lot of objections, on account of the weather and everything. I wish we'd had a chance to tell him last night or this morning. I'd have telephoned to him this afternoon except—well, I scarcely like to call him up at that place since your father—"

"No, of course not, mama."

"If Walter gets home late," Mrs. Adams went on, "I'll just slip out and speak to him, in case Mr. Russell's here before he comes. I'll just tell him he's got to hurry and get his things on."

"Maybe he won't come home to dinner," Alice suggested, rather hopefully. "Sometimes he doesn't."

"No; I think he'll be here. When he doesn't come he usually telephones by this time to say not to wait for him; he's very thoughtful about that. Well, it really is getting late; I must go and tell her she ought to be preparing her fillet. Dearie, do rest a little."

"You'd much better do that yourself," Alice called after her, but Mrs. Adams shook her head cheerily, not pausing on her way to the fiery kitchen.

Alice continued her useless labors for a time; then carried her bucket to the head of the cellar stairway, where she left it upon the top step; and, closing the door, returned to the "living room."

And she changed the positions of the old plush rocking chairs, moving them into the corners where she thought they might be least noticeable; and while thus engaged she was startled by a loud ringing of the door-bell. For a moment her face was panic-stricken, and she stood staring; then she realized that Russell would not arrive for another hour, at the earliest, and recovering her equanimity, went to the door.

Waiting there, in a languid attitude, was a young colored woman, with a small bundle under her arm and something malleable in her mouth. "Listen," she said. "You folks expectin' a colored lady?"

"No," said Alice. "Especially not at the front door."

"Listen," the colored woman said again. "Listen, say, listen. Ain't they another colored lady already here by the day? Listen. Ain't Miz Malena Burns here by the day this evenin'? Say, listen. This the number house she give me."

"Are you the waitress?" Alice asked dismally.

"Yes'm, if Malena here."

"Malena is here," Alice said, and hesitated; but she decided not to send the waitress to the back door; it might be a risk. She let her in. "What's your name?"

"Me? I'm name' Gertrude. Miss Gertrude Callamus."

"Did you bring a cap and apron?" Gertrude took the little bundle from under her arm. "Yes'm, I'm all fix'."

"I've already set the table," Alice said. "I'll show you what we want done."

She led the way to the dining-room and, after offering some instruction there, received by Gertrude with languor and a slowly moving jaw, she took her into the kitchen, where the cap and apron were put on. The effect was not fortunate: Gertrude's eyes were noticeably bloodshot, an affliction made more apparent by a white cap, and Alice drew her mother apart, whispering anxiously:

"Do you suppose it's too late to get some eye salve?"

"I'm afraid it is," Mrs. Adams said. "Malena says it was hard enough to get her! You have to pay them so much that they only work when they feel like it."

"Mama, could you ask her to wear her cap straighter? Every time she moves her head she gets it on one side, and her skirt's too long behind and too short in front—and, oh, I've never seen such feet!" Alice laughed desolately. "And she must quit that

terrible chewing!"

"Never mind; I'll get to work with her. I'll straighten her out all I can, dearie; don't worry." Mrs. Adams patted her daughter's shoulder encouragingly. "Now you can't do anything else, and if you don't run and begin dressing you won't be ready. I'll only take me a minute to dress, myself, and I'll be down long before you will. Run, darling! I'll look after everything."

Alice nodded vaguely, went up to her room, and, after only a moment with her mirror, brought from her closet the dress of white organdie she had worn the night when she met Russell for the first time. She laid it carefully upon her bed and began to make ready to put it on. Her mother came in half an hour later, to "tasten" her.

"I'm all dressed," Mrs. Adams said, briefly. "Of course it doesn't matter,

## DOINGS OF THE DUFFS—



OUT OUR WAY—By WILLIAMS



THEM DAYS IS GONE FOREVER—



THE OLD HOME TOWN—By STANLEY



ED WURLER, WHO DELIVERS WASHINGS FOR HIS WIFE, HAS SENT AWAY FOR A SET OF PATENT FISH HOOKS THAT YOU ONLY NEED TO BAIT ONCE A SEASON, THEREBY SAVING QUITE A BIT OF TIME—

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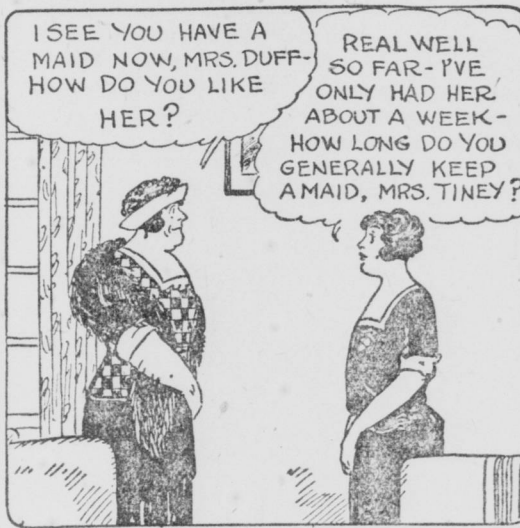
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## An Unexpected Caller



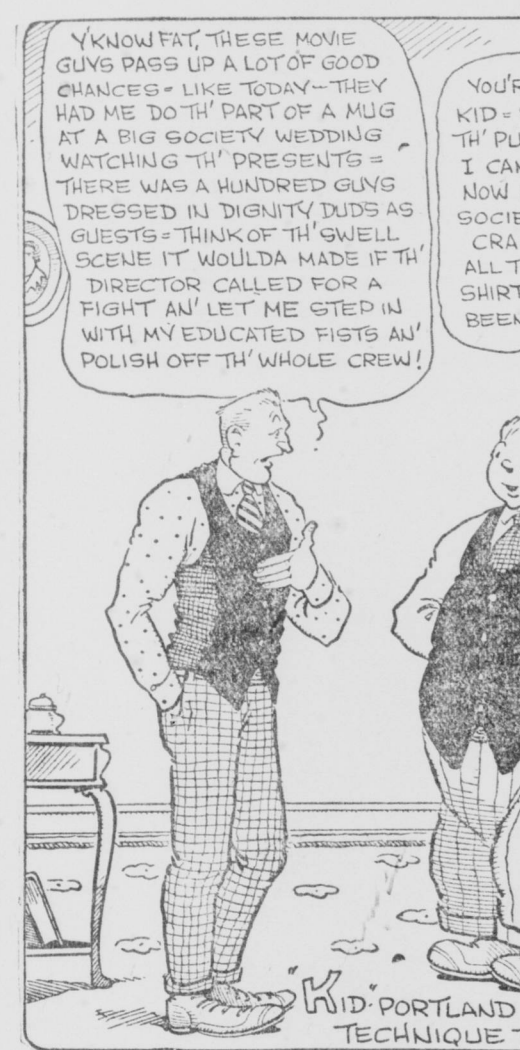
FRECKLES AND HIS FRIENDS—By BLOSSER



Chance This On Your Cello



OUR BOARDING HOUSE—By AHERN



Y'KNOW FAT, THESE MOVIE GUYS PASS UP A LOT OF GOOD CHANCES—LIKE TODAY—THEY HAD ME DO TH' PART OF A MUG AT A BIG SOCIETY WEDDING WATCHING TH' PRESENTS—THERE WAS A HUNDRED GUYS DRESSED IN DIGNITY DUFFS AS GUESTS—THINK OF TH' GWEIL SCENE IT WOULD'VE BEEN IF TH' DIRECTOR CALLED FOR A FIGHT AN' LET ME STEP IN WITH MY EDUCATED FISTS AN' POLISH OFF TH' WHOLE CREW!

"You're right," the man said, "it's action th' public wants—I can see you now in that society scene cracking all th' boiled shirts—THAT'D BEEN A RIOT!"

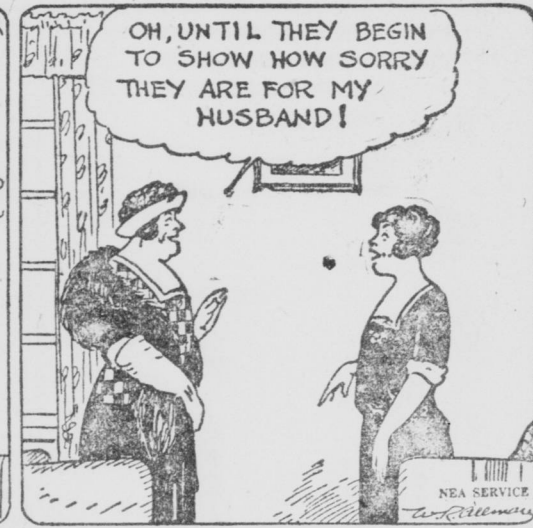
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—By AL POSEN



KID PORTLAND WOULD LIKE TO ADD HIS TECHNIQUE TO THE SCENARIOS

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(To Be Continued)