

## ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE, *NAJIB*, *RUNAWAY BAG*, and *WOLF*

Albert Payson Terhune was famous for his books about dogs, especially a collie named Lad, who first appeared in stories in the 1910s (Lassie wouldn't arrive until 1938, written by Eric Knight). *Wolf* (1925) is not about a wolf but about a son of Lad who has a bad temper.

Terhune also wrote novels set in foreign climes like *Najib* (1925). *Najib* draws on Terhune's experience growing up in Syria, and its dust-jacket image of a Syrian man bowing low to a white man—the white man in a pith helmet with a gun—is an index of the colonialist attitudes that run through all his work. As a reviewer of *Najib* said, “Terhune writes most humanly when he weaves a yarn about collies.” In the adventure story *Runaway Bag* (1925), the principals end up in Algeria. At one point our hero hears a man yelling at his son, saying “May heaven curse your religion!” and “May heaven curse your father!” He asks a friend, isn't that man cursing himself? The answer:

Precisely. Neither of them has any idea that the curses are of a boomerang sort. That's a trait of the Near East. The natives everywhere, seem born without the remotest sense of humor or of the ridiculous. It keeps them from being self-conscious, of course. That is one blessing about it.... But I think it's what has kept the Mohammedans from holding their own in the march

of world progress, too. Without a sense of humor, somehow, there seems no incentive to forge ahead. Perhaps that's silly.

Terhune also published a wide range of book reviews in 1925, including reviews of the hipster novel *Firecrackers* by Carl Van Vechten, the proletarian Italian immigrant novel *Reamer Lou* by Louis Forgione, the romance novel *House of Menerdue* by A.C. Benson, and other comedies, adventure stories, and literary translations.