

A Gentleman From Mississippi

By THOMAS A. WISE

Novelized From the Play by Frederick R. Toombs

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"The south was never whipped, sir. We honorably surrendered, sir. We surrendered to save the country, sir, but we were never whipped."

"Did you not run at Kenyon HIBBY taunted Stoneman. Langdon brought down his fist in the palm of the other hand violently. "Yes, sir; we ran at you. I ought to remember. I got my wound there. You remember that long lane"— He pulled off his hat and threw it on the floor, indicating it with one hand—"Here was the Second Alabama."

The hat of the old Federal dropped on the floor opposite the hat of the Confederate. "And here the Eighth Illinois," exclaimed Stoneman. Langdon excitedly seized a diminutive bellboy passing by and planted him alongside his hat. "Stay there a moment, sonny," he cried. "You are the Fourth Virginia."

The newspaper Stoneman was carrying came down opposite the startled bellboy, who was trying not to appear frightened. "This is the clump of cedars," he exclaimed.

Both, in their eagerness, were bending down over their improvised battle plan, their heads close together.

"And here a farmhouse beside your cedars," cried Langdon. "That's where the rebels charged us," echoed the Union man.

Langdon brought down his fist again with emphatic gesture. "You bet, we charged you! The Third Mississippi charged you! I charged you, sir!" Stoneman nodded.

"I remember a young fool of a Johnnie rebel dashing up the hill fifty yards ahead of his men, waving his sword and yelling like a wild Indian."

The southerner straightened up. "Well, where in thunderation would you expect me to be, sir?" he exclaimed. "Behind them? I got my wound there. Laid me up for three months; like to have killed me."

Then a new idea struck him. "Why, colonel, it must have been a bullet from one of your men—from your regiment, sir!"

The old northerner pushed his fingers through his hair and shook his head apologetically. "Why, senator, I'm afraid it was," he hesitated.

Langdon's eyes were big with the afterglow of a fighter discussing the mighty struggles of the past, those most precious of all the jewels in the treasure store of a soldier's memory.

"Why, it might have been a bullet fired by you, sir," he cried. "It might be that you were the man who almost killed me. Why, confound you, sir, I'm glad to meet you!"

Each old veteran of tragic days gone by had quite unconsciously awakened a responsive chord in the heart of the other. A senator and a penniless old "down and outer" are very much the same in the human scale that takes note of the inside and not the outside of a man. And they fell into each other's arms then and there, for what strong fighter does not respect another of his kind?

There they stood, arms around each other, clapping each other on the back.



"Here was the Second Alabama," actually chortling in the pure ecstasy of comradeship, now serious, again laughing, when on the scene appeared Bud Haines, the correspondent, who had returned to interview the new senator from Mississippi. "Great heavens!" ejaculated the newspaper man. "A senator, a United States senator, bugging a broken down old 'has been!' What is the world coming to?" Haines suddenly paused. "I wonder if it can be a pose—merely for

effect. It's getting harder every day to tell what's genuine and what isn't in this town."

CHAPTER VII.

LANGDON LEARNS OF THINGS UNPLEASANT.

HAINES quickly walked over and touched the southerner on the arm. "Well, my boy, what can I do for you?" asked the new senator, turning, with a pleasant smile. "My name is Haines. Senator Stevens was to speak to you about me. I'm the first of the newspaper correspondents come to interview you."

Langdon's familiar smile broadened. "Well, you don't look as though you'd bite. Reckon I can stand for it. Is it very painful?" "I hope it won't be, senator," Haines said, feeling instinctively that he was going to like this big, hearty citizen. "All right, Mr. Haines, just as soon as I've said goodby to my old friend, Colonel Stoneman, I'll be with you."

And to his continued amazement Haines saw the senator walk away with the old Union colonel, slap him on the back, cheer him up and finally bid him goodby after extending a cordial invitation to come around to dinner, meet his daughters and talk over old times.

The antiquated Federal soldier marched away more erect, more brisk, than in years, completely restored to favor in the eyes of the hotel people. Langdon turned to the reporter. "All right, Mr. Haines; my hands are up. Do your worst. Senator Stevens spoke to me about you; said you were the smartest young newspaper man in Washington. You must come from the south."

Bud shook his head. "No, just New York," he said. "Well, that's a promising town," drawled the southerner. "They tell me that's the Vicksburg of the north."

"I suppose you haven't been to New York of late, senator?" suggested the newspaper man. "Well, I started up there with General Lee once," responded Langdon reminiscently, "but we changed our minds and came back. You may have heard about that trip."

Haines admitted that he had. "Since that time," went on Langdon, "I've confined my travels to New Orleans and Vicksburg. Ever been in New Orleans about Mardi Gras time, Mr. Haines?"

"Sorry, but I don't believe I have," confessed the reporter reluctantly. The senator seemed surprised.

"Well, sir, you have something to live for. I'll make it my special business to personally conduct you through one Mardi Gras, with a special understanding, of course, that you don't print anything in the paper. I'm a vestryman in my church, but since misfortune has come upon our state I have to be careful."

Haines searched his brain. He knew of no grave calamity that had happened recently in Mississippi. "Misfortune?" he questioned. Senator Langdon nodded.

"Yes, sir, the great old state of Mississippi went prohibition at the last election. I don't know how it happened. We haven't found anybody in the state that says he voted for it, but the fact is a fact. I assure you, Mr. Haines, that prohibition stops at my front door, in Mississippi. So I've been living a quiet life down on my plantation."

"This new life will be a great change for you, then?" suggested the reporter. "Change! It's revolutionary, sir! When you're expected to spend your old days peacefully in the country, Mr. Haines, suddenly to find that your state has called on you!"

A favor of sarcasm came into Haines' reply. "The office seeking the man?" He could not help the slight sneer. Was a man never to admit that he had sought the office? Haines knew only too well of the arduous work necessary to secure nominations for high office in conventions and to win an election to the senate from a state legislature. In almost every case, he knew, the candidate must make a dozen different "deals" to secure votes, might promise the same office to two or three different leaders, force others into line by threats, send a trusted agent to another with a roll of bank bills—the recipient of which would immediately conclude that this candidate was the only man in the state who could save the nation from destruction. Had not Haines seen men who had sold their unsuspecting delegates for cash to the highest bidder rise in the convention hall and in impassioned, dramatic voice exclaim in praise of the buyer, "Gentlemen, it would be a crying shame, a crime against civilization, if the chosen representatives of our grand old state of — did not go on record in favor of such a man, such a true citizen, such an inspired patriot, as he whose name I am about to mention!" So the reporter may be forgiven for the ironical tinge in his hasty interruption of the new senator's remarks.

Langdon could not suppress a chuckle at the doubting note in Haines' attitude.

"I think the man would be pretty small potatoes who wouldn't seek the office of United States senator, Mr. Haines," he said, "if he could get it. When I was a young man, sir, politics in the south was a career for a gentleman, and I still can't see how he could be better engaged than in the service of his state or his country."

"That's right," agreed the reporter, further impressed by the frank sincerity of the Mississippian. "The only condition in my mind, Mr. Haines, is that the man should ask himself searchingly whether or not he's competent to give the service. But I seem to be talking a good deal. Suppose we get to the interview. Expect your time is short. We'd better begin."

"I thought we were in the interview?" smiled the correspondent. "In it!" exclaimed Langdon. "Well, if this is it, it isn't so bad. I see you use a painless method. When I was down in Vicksburg a reporter backed me up in a corner, slipped his hand in his hip pocket and pulled out a list of questions just three feet four inches long."

"He wanted to know what I thought concerning the tariff on aluminum hydrates and how I stood about the opening of the Tonto Pu reservation of the Comanche Indians, and what were my ideas about the differential rate of hauls from the Missouri river."

"He was a wonder, that fellow! Kinder out of place on a Mississippi paper. I started to offer him a job, but he was so proud I was afraid he wouldn't accept it. However, it gives you my idea of a reporter."

"If you've been against that, I ought to thank you for talking to me," laughed Haines. "Then you don't want to know anything about that sort of stuff?" said Langdon, with a hugh sigh of relief.

"No, senator," was the amused reply. "I think generally if I know what sort of a man a man is I can tell a great deal about what he will think on various questions."

Langdon started interestedly. "You mean, Mr. Haines, if you know whether I'm honest or not you can fit

me up with a set of views. Is that the idea? Seems to me you're the sort of man I'm looking for."

The other smilingly shook his head. "I wouldn't dare fix up a United States senator with a set of views," he said. "I only mean that I think what a man is is important. I've been doing Washington for a number of years. I've had an exceptional opportunity to see how politics work. I don't believe in party politics. I don't believe in parties, but I do believe in men."

Langdon nodded approvingly, then a twinkle shone in his eyes. "We don't believe in parties in Mississippi," he drawled. "We've only one—the Democratic party—and a few kickers."

Haines grinned broadly at this description of southern politics. "What was this you were saying

about national politics?" continued the Mississippian. "I'm a beginner, you know, and I'm always ready to learn."

"This is a new thing—a reporter teaching a senator politics," laughed Haines. Senator Langdon joined in the merriment.

"I reckon reporters could teach United States senators lots of things, Mr. Haines, if the senators had sense enough to go to school. Now, I come up here on a platform the chief principle of which is the naval base for the gulf. Now, how are we going to put that through? My state wants it."

"You're probably sure it will be a wonderful thing for the country and the south," suggested Haines. "Of course."

"But why do you think most of the congressmen and senators will vote for it?"

The southerner took off his hat, leaned back and gazed across the lobby thoughtfully.

"Seems to me the benefit to the south and country would be sufficient reason, Mr. Haines," he finally replied.

The newspaper man's brain worked rapidly. Going over the entire conversation with Langdon and what he had seen of him, he was certain that the Mississippian believed what he said—that, moreover, the belief was deeply rooted. His long newspaper training had educated Haines in the ways of men, their actions and mental processes—what naturally to expect from a given set of circumstances. He felt a growing regard, an affection, for this unassuming old man before him, who did not know and probably would be slow to understand the hypocrisy, the cunning trickery of lawmakers who unmake laws.

"Sufficient reason for you, senator," Haines added. "You have not been in politics very long, have you?" he queried dryly.

A wry smile wrinkled the Mississippian's face.

"Been in long enough to learn some unpleasant things I didn't know before." He remembered Martin Sanders.

"Will you allow me to tell you a few more?" asked Haines. Langdon inclined his head in acquiescence. "Reckon I'd better know the worst and get through with it."

"Well, then, senator, somebody from Nebraska will vote for what you want in the way of the naval base because he'll think then you'll help him demand money to dredge some muddy creek that he has an interest in."

"Somebody in Pennsylvania will vote for it because he owes a grudge and wants to hurt the Philadelphia ship people."

"You'll get the Democrats because it's for the south, but if your bill was for the west coast they might fight it tooth and nail, even with the Japanese fleet cruising dangerously near."

"And the Republicans may vote for it because they see a chance to claim glory and perhaps break the solid south in the next presidential campaign. You catch the idea?"

"What?" exclaimed the Langdon. "Well, who in hades will because it's for the good of the States?" he gasped.

"I believe you will, senator," Haines, with ready confidence.

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

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WHEREAS, Mrs. Mollie Eugenia Johnson made suit to me to grant her Letters of Administration of the Estate of and effects of D. K. Johnson.

THESE ARE THEREFORE to cite and admonish all and singular the kindred and creditors of the said D. K. Johnson, deceased, that they be and appear before me, in the Court of Probate, to be held at Kingtree, S. C., on the 28th day of June next after publication thereof, at 11 o'clock in the forenoon, to show cause, if any they have, why the said administration should not be granted.

GIVEN under my Hand, this 17th day of June, A. D. 1909. Published on the 17th day of June 1909 in the County Record P. M. BROCKINTON, Probate Judge.

6-17-2t

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