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AT ALL DRUG STORES

A Gentleman from Mississippi

By THOMAS A. WISE

Novelized From the Play by Frederick R. Toombs

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(Continued from Yesterday.)

Langdon walked over to Stevens and faced him directly.

"Do you remember, Stevens, Lorimer Hawkslee, back in wartime?"

"Yes," said Stevens, puzzled, "I remember him—a very fine gentleman."

The old planter sneered.

"Yes, a very fine gentleman! You remember he got rich out of contracts for supplies furnished to the Confederate government when it wasn't any too easy for the Confederate government to pay and when he was in that government himself. I never quite thought that the act of a gentleman, Stevens. It seemed to me to be very like dishonesty. I refused to speak to Lorimer Hawkslee in the Carroll hotel at Vicksburg, and when the people there asked me why I told them, I want to warn you, Stevens, that I'm likely to meet you some time in the Carroll hotel at Vicksburg."

Stevens backed away angrily. "I catch your insinuation, but"—he received a warning glance from Peabody and broke into a pleasant smile calculated to deceive the old planter—"this once I will overlook it because of our old friendship and the old days in Mississippi."

"You are a fine talker, Langdon," said Peabody, coming to Stevens' rescue, "but I can readily see what you are driving at. You want an investigation. You think you will catch some of us with what you reformers call 'the goods,' but forget evidently the entirely simple facts that your family has invested in Altacoola lands more heavily probably than any one else among us. You want to raise a scandal, do you? Well, go on and raise it, but remember that you will have to explain how it happened that there is \$50,000 invested in the name of your son and \$25,000 in the name of your daughter, Miss Carolina, not to mention a few thousands put in by the gentleman who, I am given to understand, is to be your son-in-law, Congressman Norton."

"How about that, Norton?" Peabody asked, turning to the congressman, who had followed Stevens.

"I corroborate all you've said," remarked Norton. "I can state positively that Senator Langdon knew that his



"I'm likely to meet you some time in the Carroll hotel."

money was going into Altacoola land. I will swear to it if necessary," and he glared bitterly at Carolina's father, feeling certain that the girl would cling to him as opposed to her parent.

Langdon made a threatening move at the congressman.

"I consider my riddance of you mighty cheap at the price," he cried.

"Come, come, Langdon," fumed Peabody, "I must get away from here to catch the midnight train. Let's get through with this matter. You must realize that you cannot fight me in Washington. You must know that men call me the 'king of the senate.' I can beat any measure you introduce. I can pass any measure you want passed. I can make you a laughing-stock or a power."

"Why, my friend from Mississippi, I can even have your election to the senate contested, have a committee appointed to investigate the manner of your election, have that committee decide that you bought your way into the honorable body, the senate of the United States, and on the strength of that decision have you forfeit your seat! What a pretty heritage to hand down to posterity such a disgrace will be!

"Why, the very school children of the future will hear about you as 'Looty Langdon,' and their parents will tell them how particularly disgusting it was for a man of your reputation to drag into your dishonest schemes your son, sir, and your daughter. For who will believe that this money was not put in these lands without your consent, without your direction, your order? Did you not sign the mortgage on which this \$50,000 was raised?"

Senator Langdon waved his hand deprecatingly. "I'm learning the underhanded ways of your professional politicians. I'm getting wise. I'm learning the game, so I know you're bluffing me, Peabody. But you forget that the game of poker was invented in Mississippi—my native state."

Pressing a button, Langdon summoned a servant and said: "Send in Mr. Haines. I guess I've got to have a witness for my side."

"It's no bluff," spoke Stevens as Haines entered. "Peabody can and will break you like a pipstern; he's done it to other men before you who—who tried to dispute his power. But I'll try to save you. I'll ask him to be mar-

eful. You are not of any importance in the senate. We do not need to deal with you."

"Then why do you both spend so much time on me?" asked Langdon innocently. "Why doesn't Peabody go to Philadelphia?"

"Langdon," said Peabody, "you know my control of the senate is no piece of fiction. But I will forgive your obstinacy, even forget it!"

"Look here," cried Langdon, "just because I'm a fat man don't think that I can't lose my temper." He stopped and gazed at his two colleagues.

"Now, you two men stay still one moment, and I'll tell you what really



"Because I'm fat don't think I can't lose my temper."

will happen tomorrow," he exploded, "and I'm only a beginner in the game that's your specialty. The naval base is going to Altacoola!"

"Good!" simultaneously cried both Peabody and Stevens. "You're coming in with us!"

"No, I'm not, but I'll pass the bill so that nobody makes a cent, just as I said I would. I'll fool you both and make you both honest for once in spite of your natural dispositions."

Stevens and the Pennsylvanian stared at each other in disgust.

"Furthermore," continued Langdon, "Altacoola must have the base because I've known for some time that Gulf City was impossible. But some crooked senators would have made money if they'd known it, so they didn't learn it. Altacoola, that proud arm of our great gulf, will have those battleships floating on her broad bosom and the country will be the better off, and so will the sovereign state of Mississippi—God bless it—but neither Senator Peabody of Pennsylvania nor Senator Stevens of Mississippi is going to be any better because of it. No, and if you men come to my committee room at 12:30 tomorrow noon, you'll have a chance to hear how all that's coming about. If you are not there by that time I'll bring in a minority report in favor of Gulf City just to show you that I know how to play the game—the Washington game!"

"Come, let's go. We can do nothing with him," said Peabody to the senior senator from Mississippi.

"Well, senator, in the name of goodness, what are you going to do? How can you win for Altacoola without letting these grafters make money out of it?" asked Haines in astonishment as the other two walked away. "What are you going to do at 12:30 tomorrow?"

Langdon turned to him and rolled his eyes toward the ceiling despairingly.

"I'm blamed if I know!" he exclaimed.

CHAPTER XXII

LOBBYISTS—AND ONE IN PARTICULAR.

WASHINGTON has known many lobbyists in its time, and it keeps on knowing them. The striking increase in legislation that aims to restrict unlawful or improper practices in business, the awakening of the public conscience, has caused a greater demand than ever for influence at the national capital, for these restrictive measures must be either killed or emasculated to a point of uselessness by that process which is the salvation of many a corrupt manipulator, the process of amendment.

Predatory corporations, predatory business associations of different sorts and predatory individuals have their representatives on the field at Washington to ward off attack by any means that brains can devise or money procure and to obtain desired favors at a cost that will leave a profitable balance for the purchaser. When commercial tricksters, believing in the lobbyist's favorite maxim, "The People Forget," feel that they have outlived the latest reform movement and see "the good old days" returning, the professional politicians introduce a few reform measures themselves, most stringent measures. They push these measures ahead until somebody pays up, then the bill dies. The lobbyist knows all about these "strike" bills, but does not frown on them. No, no. Perhaps he helped draw up one of these bills so that, with the aid of his inside knowledge of his employer's business, the measure is made to give a greater score than might otherwise have resulted. The bigger the score the bigger the fund advanced, of course, for the lobbyist to handle. All this also helps the lobbyist to secure and retain employment.

Not all the Washington lobbyists are outside of congress. The senator or congressman has unequalled facilities for obtaining or blocking the course of a bill. Sometimes he confides himself to the interests of his own clients, who fear they may be. But sometimes he notices a bill that promises to be a pretty good thing for the client of some other member if it passes. Then he begins to fight this bill so actively that he must be "let in on the deal!"

(To Be Continued.)

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