

A GENTLEMAN FROM MISSISSIPPI

By THOMAS A. WISE

Novelized From the Play by Frederick R. Toombs

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CHAPTER II. THE WARS OF PEACE.

"BIG BILL" LANGDON was the term by which the new senator from Mississippi had been affectionately known to his intimates for years. He carried his 230 pounds with ease, bespeaking great muscular power in spite of his gray hairs. His rugged courage, unswerving honesty and ready belief in his friends won him a loyal following, some of whom frequently repeated what was known as "Bill Langdon's Golden Rule."

"There never was a man yet who didn't have some good in him, but most folks don't know this because their own virtues pop up and blind 'em when they look at somebody else."

At the reunions of his old war comrades Langdon was always depended on to describe once again how the Third Mississippi charged at Crawfordsville and defeated the Eighth Illinois. But the stirring events of the past had served to increase the planter's fondness for his home life and his children, whose mother had died years before. At times he regretted that his unexpected political duties would take him away from the old plantation even though the enthusiastic approval of Carolina and Hope Georgia proved considerable compensation.

Although not sworn in as senator, Colonel Langdon's political duties were already pressing. A few days after Congressman Norton's visit he sat in his library conferring with several prominent citizens of his county regarding a plan to ask congress to appropriate money to dredge a portion of the channel of the Pearl river, which would greatly aid a large section of the state.

During the deliberations the name of Martin Sanders was announced by Jackson, the colonel's gravely decorous negro bodyguard, who boasted that he "wuz brung up by Cuneil Marse Langdon, sub, a fightin' Mississippi cuneil, sub, sence long befo' de wah and way befo' dat, sub."

"Show Mr. Sanders right in," commanded Colonel Langdon.

"Good day, senator," spoke Sanders, the boss of seven counties, as he entered. Glancing around the room, he continued, bending toward the colonel and muffling his now whispering voice with his hand: "I want to speak to you alone. I'm here on politics."

"That's all right, but these gentlemen here are my friends and constituents," was the reply in no uncertain voice. "When I talk politics they have a perfect right to hear what I, as their senator, say. Out with it, Mr. Sanders."

As Sanders was introduced to the members of the conference he grew red in the face and stared at Langdon amazed. At last he had discovered something new in politics. "Say," he finally blurted, "when I talk business"

"Are you in politics as a business?" quickly spoke Colonel Langdon.

"Why—I er—no, of course not," the visitor stammered. "I am in politics

fellers, voters, voters, voters, d— it, hangin' on to me that needs to be taken care of! An' so I make the fellers that work help those that don't. Why, Langdon, what 'n h— are you kickin' an' questionin' about? Didn't you get my twelve votes in the legislature? Did you have a chance for senator without 'em? Answer me that, will you? Why, with 'em you only had two more than needed to elect an' the opposition crowd was solid for Wilson," cried the angry boss, pounding the long table before which Langdon sat.

"I'll answer you almighty quick," retorted the now thoroughly aroused senator elect, rising and shaking his clinched fist at Sanders. "Those twelve votes you say were yours—yours?"

"Yes, mine. Them noble legislators that cast 'em was an' is mine, mine. I tell you, jest like I had 'em in my pocket, an' that's where I mostly carry 'em, so as they won't go strayin' aroun' careless-like."

"You didn't have to vote those men for me. I told you at the capitol that I would not make you or anybody else any promises. You voted them for me of your own accord. That's my answer."

At this point the gentlemen of the county present when Sanders entered and who had no desire to witness further the unpleasant episode rose to leave, in spite of the urgent request of Colonel Langdon that they remain. The only one reluctant to go was Deacon Amos Smallwood, who, coming to the plantation to seek employment for his son, had not been denied of his desire to join the assemblage of his neighbors.

Last to move toward the door, he stopped in front of Sanders, stretched his five feet three inches of stature on tiptoe and shook a withered fist in the boss' firmly set, determined face.

"Infamous!" shrieked the deacon. "You're a monster! You're unrighteous! You should have belonged to the political machine of Cataline or Pontius Pilate!"

"Never heard tell o' them," muttered Sanders, deeply puzzled. "Guess they was never in Mississippi in my time."

His accompanying gesture of perplexity caused the deacon to hasten his exit. Tripping over the leg of a chair, he fell headlong into the arms of the watchful Jackson, who received the deacon's blessing for "upliftin' the righteous in the hour of their fall."

Believed at the departure of the witnesses, Sanders showed increased aggressiveness. "To be sure, senator, you were careful not to personally promise me anything for my support at the election, as you say," the leader sneered, "but you had Jim Stevens make promises for you, which was smooth, absolute an' artistic smooth."

"Stop, sir!" Langdon furiously shouted. "You forget, sir, that your insinuation is an insult to a man elected senator from Mississippi, an insult to my state and to my friend Senator Stevens, who I know would make you no promises for me, for he had not my authority."

"Certainly you're a senator, but what's a senator anyhow? I'll tell you, Mr. Colonel Langdon, a senator is a man who holds out for his own pocket as much as us fellows that make him will stand for. When we don't get our rightful share, he's through."

With a sudden start, as though to spring at Sanders' throat, Langdon, with compressed lips and eyes blazing, grasped the edge of the table with a grip that threatened to read the polished boards. With intensest effort he slowly regained control of himself. His fury had actually weakened him. His knees shook, and he sank weakly into a chair. When he finally spoke his voice was strained and laborious. "Sanders, you and I, sir, must never meet again because I might not succeed again in keeping my hands off you. What would my old comrades of the Third Mississippi say if they saw me sitting here and you there with a whole body, sir, after what you have said? They would not believe their eyes, thank God, sir. They would all go over to Stuart City and buy new eyeglasses, sir." A suspicious moisture appeared on the colonel's cheeks which he could not dry too quickly to escape Sanders' observation.

"But I had to let you stay, sir, because you, the sole accuser, are the only one who can tell me what I must know."

"What do you want to know?" asked Sanders, who had realized his great mistake in losing his temper, in talking as openly and as violently as he had and in dragging the name of Senator Stevens into the controversy. He must try to keep Stevens from hearing of this day's blunder, for Jim Stevens knew as well as he, didn't he, that the

man who takes his temper, like the man who talks too much, is of no use in politics.

"I want to know how you formed your opinion of political matters—of senators. Is it possible, sir, that you have actual knowledge of actual happenings that give you the right to talk as you have? I want to know if I must feel shame, feel disgrace, sir, to be a senator from Mississippi, that state, sir, that the Almighty himself, sir, would choose to live in if he came to earth."

"There, there, senator, don't take too seriously what I have said," Sanders replied in reassuring tone, having outlined his course of action. "I lost my head because you wouldn't promise me something I needed—that appointment for Hagley. What I said about senators an' such was all wild words—nothin' in 'em. Why, how could there be, senator? This query was a happy afterthought which Sanders craftily suggested in a designedly artless manner."

"Just what I thought and know!" exclaimed Langdon sharply. "It couldn't be; it isn't possible. Now you go, sir, and let it be your greatest disgrace that you are not fit to enter any gentleman's house."

"Oh, don't rub it in too hard, senator. You may need my help some day, but you'll have to deliver the goods beforehand."

"I said, 'Go!'"

"I'm goin', but here's a tip. Don't blame me for fightin' you. I've got to fight to live. I'm a human bein', an' humans are pretty much the same all over the world, all except you—you're only half natural. The rest of you is reformer."

After Sanders' departure the colonel sat at his table, his head resting in his hand, the events of the day crowding his brain bewilderingly.

"The battles of peace are worse than any Beauregard ever led me into," he murmured. "Fighting to conquer oneself is harder than turning the left flank of the Eighth Illinois in an engaging fire."

But the new senator from Mississippi did not know that for him the wars of peace had only just begun, that perhaps his own flesh and blood and that of the wife and mother who had gone before would turn traitor to his colors in the very thickest of the fray.

CHAPTER III. HOW TO PLEASE A SENATOR.

THE International hotel in Washington was all bustle and bustle. Was it not preparing for its first senator since 1885? No less a personage than the Hon. William H. Langdon of Mississippi, said to be a warm personal friend of Senator Stevens, one of the leading members of his party at the capital, had engaged a suite of rooms for himself and two daughters.

"Ain't it the limit?" remarked the chief clerk to Bud Haines, correspondent of the New York Star. "The senator wrote us that he was coming here because his old friend, the late Senator Moseley, said back in '75 that this was the best hotel in Washington and where all the prominent men ought to stay."

Haines, the ablest political reporter in Washington, had come to the International to interview the new senator, to describe for his paper what kind of a citizen Langdon was. He glanced around at the dingy woodwork, the worn cushions, the nicked and uneven tiles of the hotel lobby, and smiled at the clerk. "Well, if this is the new senator's idea of princely luxury he will fit right into the senatorial atmosphere." Both laughed derisively. "By the way," added Haines, "I suppose you'll raise your rates now that you've got a senator here."

The clerk brought his fist down on the register with a thud.

"We could have them every day if we wanted them. This fellow, though, we'll have all winter, I guess. His son's here now. Been breaking all records for drinkin' Congressman Norton of Mississippi has been down here with him a few times. There young Langdon is now."

Haines turned quickly, just in time to bump into a tall, slender young man, who was walking unevenly in the direction of the cafe.

"Well, can't you see what you're doing?" muttered the tall young man thickly.

Haines smiled. The chap who has played halfback four years on his college eleven and held the boxing championship in his class is apt to be good natured. He does not have to take offense easily. Besides, Randolph Langdon was plainly under the influence of whisky. So Haines smiled pleasantly at the taller young man.

"Beg your pardon—my fault," Haines said.

"Well, don't let it occur again," mumbled Langdon as he strolled with un-

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At a recent meeting of the Enterprise school board the following resolutions were adopted:

Mr. and Mrs. W. M. Sutton: We the undersigned board of directors of school district No. 21, of Wallowa county, Oregon, in behalf of the patrons of this district and also ourselves, wish to extend to you our thanks and appreciation of the good services you have rendered in our school's. We also wish to say that our school now has the reputation of being one of the best in Eastern Oregon, and we consider that to you is due the credit of its gaining his high standing. Hoping that you will be successful in your new vocations, we remain,

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Them noble legislators was mine.



Carolina Langdon had an austere love-ness.

for my party's sake, just like everybody else," and Sanders grinned suggestively at his questioner.

"Have you anything further to say?" asked Langdon in a tone hinting that he would like to be rid of his caller.

"Well, since you are so very new in this game, senator, I'll talk right out in meetin', as they call it. I came to ask about an appointment an' to tip you off on a couple o' propositions. I want Jim Hagley taken care of—you've heard of Jim—was clerk o' Fenimore county. A \$2,000 a year job 'll do for him; \$500 o' that he gives to the organization."

"You're the organization, aren't you?" queried Langdon.

"Why, yes. Are you just gettin' wise?" cried Sanders. "Haven't I got

even agin' you?"

"I guess young Langdon is going to be one of the boys, isn't he?"

"He's already one of them when it comes to a question of fluid capacity," laughed some one behind him, and Bud whirled to meet the gaze of his friend, Dick Cullen, representative of one of the big Chicago dailies.

"You down here to see Langdon, too?" commented Bud.

Cullen nodded. "Queer roost where this senator is to hang out, isn't it?"

"It can't be a rich one, then," suggested Haines.

Cullen chuckled. "Perhaps he's an honest one."

"I hadn't thought of that. You always were original, Dickie," commented Haines dryly. "By the way, what do you know about him?"

"Nothing, except that the Evening Call printed a picture of his eldest daughter—says she's the queen daughter of the south, a famous beauty, rich planter for a father, mother left her a fortune."

"She'll cut quite a social caper with this hotel's name on her cards, won't she?" broke in Haines as he led Cullen to a seat to await the expected legislator, whose train was late.

"I don't know very much about him myself," said Haines. "All I've been able to discover is that Stevens said the word which elected him, and that looks bad. Great glory, when I think what a senator of the right sort has a chance to do here in Washington—a nonpartisan, straight out from the shoulder man!" He paused to shake his head in disgust. "You know these fellows here in the senate don't even see their chance. Why, if you and I didn't do any more to hold our jobs than they do we'd be fired by wire the first day. They know just the old political game, that's all."

"It's a great game, though, Bud," sighed Cullen longingly, for, like many



"Big Bill" Langdon, "A Gentleman from Mississippi."

newspaper men, he had the secret feeling that he was cut out to be a great politician.

"Sure, it's a great game, as a game," agreed Haines. "So is bridge, and stud poker, and three card monte, and flim-flam generally. Take this new man Langdon, for instance. Chosen by Stevens he'll probably be perfectly obedient, perfectly easy going, perfectly blind and—perfectly useless. What's wanted now is to get the work done, not play the game."

Thoroughly a cynic through his years of experience as a newspaper man, which had shown the inside workings of many important phases of the seemingly conventional life of this complex world, Cullen pretended unbounded enthusiasm.

"Hear! Hear!" he shouted. "All you earnest citizens come vote for Reformer Haines. I'm for you, Bud. What do I get in your cabinet? I've joined the reformers, too, and, like all of them, me for P-U-R-I-T-Y as long as she gives me a meal ticket."

(Continued next week.)

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