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The Gentleman From Indiana
By BOOTH TARKINGTON
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CHAPTER V.
THE bright sun of circus day shone into Harkless' window, and he awoke to find himself smiling. For a little while he lay content, drowsily wondering why he smiled, only knowing that there was something new. It was thus as a boy he had wakened on birthday mornings or on Christmas or on the Fourth of July, drifting happily out of pleasant dreams into the consciousness of long awaited delights that had come true, yet lying only half awake in a cheerful borderland, leaving happiness undefined.

The morning breeze was fluttering at his window-blind, a honeysuckle vine tapped lightly on the pane. Birds were trilling, warbling, whistling, and from the street came the rumbling of wagons, merry cries of greeting and the barking of dogs. What was it made him feel so young and strong and light hearted? The breeze brought him the smell of June roses, fresh and sweet with dew, and then he knew why he had come smiling from his dreams. He leaped out of bed and shouted loudly: "Zen! Hello, Xenophon!"

In answer an ancient, very black darky, his warped and wrinkled visage showing under his grizzled hair like charred paper in a fall of pine ashes, put his head in at the door and said: "Good mawn', sah. Yessuh, Hit's done pump' full. Good mawn', sah." A few moments later the colored man, seated on the front steps of the cottage, heard a mighty splashing within while the rafters rang with stentorian song:

"He promised to buy me a bonny blue ribbon. He promised to buy me a bonny blue ribbon. He promised to buy me a bonny blue ribbon. To tie up my bonny brown hair. Oh, dear, what can the matter be? Oh, dear, what can the matter be? Oh, dear, what can the matter be? Johnnie's so long at the fair!"

The listener's jaw dropped, and his mouth opened and stayed open. "Him!" he muttered faintly. "Singin'!" "Well the old triangle knew the music of our tread; How the peaceful Seminole would tremble in his bed!" sang the editor.

"I dunno hucome it," exclaimed the old man, "but bless Gawd, de young man happy!" A thought struck him suddenly, and he scratched his head. "Maybe he goin' away," he said querulously. "What become of ole Zen?" The splashing ceased, but not the voice, which struck into a noble marching chorus.

"Oh, my Lawd," said the colored man, "I pray you listen at dat!" "Soldiers marching up the street. They keep the time; They keep the time; Hear them play 'Die Wacht am Rhein.' They call it Schneider's band. Tra la la, la la." The length of Main street and all sides of the square resounded with the rattle of vehicles of every kind. Since earliest dawn they had been pouring into the village, a long procession, on every country road. The air was full of exhilaration; everybody was laughing and shouting and calling greetings, for Carlow county was turning out, and from far and near the country people came—nay, from over the county line; and clouds of dust arose from every thoroughfare and highway and swept into town to herald their coming. Dobb Zane, the "sprinkling contractor," had been at work with the town

water cart since the morning stars were bright, but he might as well have watered the streets with his tears, which, indeed, when the farmers began to come in, bringing their cycluses of dust, he drew nigh unto after a burst of profanity as futile as his cart. "Tief wie das Meer soll deine Liebe sein," hummed the editor in the cottage. His song had taken on a reflective tone, as that of one who contemplates a problem or musically ponders which card to play. He was kneeling before an old trunk in

his bedchamber. From one compartment he took a neatly folded pair of duck trousers and a light gray tweed coat, from another a straw hat with a ribbon of bright colors. He examined these musingly. They had lain in the trunk for a long time undisturbed. He shook the coat and brushed it. Then he laid the garments upon his bed and proceeded to shave himself carefully, after which he donned the white trousers, the gray coat and, rummaging in the trunk again, found a gay pink cravat, which he fastened about his tall collar (also a resurrection from the trunk) with a pearl pin. He took a long time to arrange his hair with a pair of brushes. When at last it suited him and his dressing was complete, he sallied forth to breakfast.

Xenophon stared after him as he went out of the gate whistling heartily. The old darky lifted his hands, palms outward. "Lan' name, who dat?" he exclaimed aloud. "Who dat in dem panjingerles? He gone fine de circus!" His hands fell upon his knees, and he got to his feet rheumatically, shaking his head with foreboding. "Honey, honey, hit baid luck, baid luck sing 'fo' breakfast.' Trouble 'fo' de day be done. Trouble, honey, great trouble. Baid luck, baid luck!"

Along the square the passing of the editor in his cool equipments was a progress, and wide were the eyes and deep the gasps of astonishment caused by his festive appearance. Mr. Tibbs and his sister rushed from the post-office to stare after him.

"He looks just beautiful, Solomon," said Miss Tibbs. Harkless usually ate his breakfast alone, as he was the latest riser in Plattville. There were days in the winter when he did not reach the hotel until 8 o'clock. This morning he found a bunch of white roses, still wet with dew and so fragrant that the whole room was fresh and sweet with their odor, prettily arranged in a bowl on the table, and at his plate the largest of all with a pin through the stem. He looked up smilingly and nodded at the red faced, red haired waitress who was waving a long fly brush over his head. "Thank you, Charmion," he said. "That's very pretty."

"That old Mr. Wimby was here," she answered, "and he left word for you to look out. The whole pocketycket of Johnsons from the Crossroads passed his house this mornin', comin' this way, and he see Bob Skillet in the square when he got to town. He left them flowers. Mrs. Wimby sent 'em to ye. I didn't bring 'em." "Thank you for arranging them." She turned even redder than she always was and answered nothing, vigorously darting her brush at an imaginary fly on the cloth. After several minutes she said abruptly, "You're welcome."

There was a silence, finally broken by a long, gasping sigh. Astonished, he looked at the girl. Her eyes were set unthinkably upon his pink tie. The wand had dropped from her nerveless hand, and she stood rapt and immovable. She started violently from her trance. "Ain't ye goin' to finish yer coffee?" she asked, plying her instrument again, and, bending slightly, whispered, "Say, Eph Watts is over there behind ye."

At a table in a far corner of the room a large gentleman in a brown frock coat was quietly eating his breakfast and reading the Herald. He was of an ornate presence, though entirely neat. A sumptuous expense of linen exhibited itself between the laps of his low cut waistcoat, and an inch of bediamonded breastpin glittered there like an ice ledge on a snowy mountain side. He had a steady blue eye and a dissipated iron gray moustache. This personage was Mr. Ephraim Watts, who, following a calling more fashionable in the eighteenth century than in the latter decades of the nineteenth, had shaken the dust of Carlow from his feet some three years previously at the strong request of the authorities. The Herald had been particularly insistent upon his deportation. In the local phrase, Harkless had "run him out o' town." Perhaps it was because the Herald's opposition, as the editor had explained at the time, had been "merely moral and impersonal," and the editor had confessed to a liking for the unprofessional qualities of Mr. Watts, that there was but a slight embarrassment when the two gentlemen met today. His breakfast finished, Harkless went over to the other and extended his hand. Cynthia, the waitress, held her breath and clutched the back of a chair. However, Mr. Watts made no motion toward his well known hip pocket. Instead he rose, flushing slightly, and accepted the hand offered him.

"I'm glad to see you, Mr. Watts," said the journalist cordially. "And also, if you are running with the circus and calculate on doing business here today, I'll have you fired out of town before noon. How are you? You're looking extremely well." "Mr. Harkless," answered Watts, "I cherish no hard feelings, and I never said but what you done exactly right when I left, three years ago. To Mr. I'm not here in a professional way at all, and I don't want to be molested. I've connected myself with an oil company, and I'm down here to look over the ground. It beats poker and fantain all hollow, though there ain't as many chances in favor of the dealer, and in all it's the farmer that gets the rakeoff. I've come back, but in an enterprising spirit this time, to open up a new field and shed light and money in Carlow. They told me never to show my face here again, but if you say I stay I guess I can." I always was sure there was oil in the county, and I want to prove it for everybody's benefit. Is it all right?" "My dear fellow," laughed the young man, shaking the gambler's hand again. "It is all right. I have always been sorry I had to act against you. Everything is all right. Stay and bore to Korea, if you like. Did ever you see such glorious weather?" "I'll let you in on some shares," Watts called after him as he turned away. The other nodded in reply and was leaving the room when Cynthia detained him by a flourish of her fly brush. "Say," she said—she always called him "Say"—"you've forgot yer flower."

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He came back and thanked her. "Will you pin it on for me, Charmion?" "I don't know what call you got to speak to me out of my name," she responded, looking at the floor moodily. "Why?" he asked, surprised. "I don't see why you want to make fun of me."

"I beg your pardon, Cynthia," he said gravely. "I didn't mean to do that. I haven't been considerate. I didn't think you'd be displeased. I'm very sorry. Won't you pin it on my coat?" Her face was lifted in grateful pleasure, and she began to pin the rose to his lapel. Her hands were large and red and trembled. She dropped the flower and, saying huskily, "I don't know as I could do it right," seized violently upon a pile of dishes and hurried from the room.

Harkless rescued the rose, pinned it on his coat himself, with the internal observation that the red haired waitress was the queerest creature in the village, and set forth upon his holiday. Mr. Lige Willetts, a stalwart bachelor, the most eligible in Carlow, and a habitual devotee of Minnie Briscoe, was seated on the veranda when Harkless turned in at the gate of the brick house. "The ladies will be down right off," he said, greeting the editor's cool finery with a perceptible agitation and the editor himself with a friendly shake of the hand. "Middy says to wait out here."

There was a faint rustling within the house, the swish of draperies on the stairs, a delicious whispering, when light feet descend, tapping, to hearts that beat an answer, the telegraphic message: "We come! We come! We are near! We are near!" Lige Willetts stared at Harkless. He had never thought the latter was good looking until he saw him step to the door to take Helen Sherwood's hand and say, in a strange, low, tense voice, "Good morning," as if he were announcing, at the least: "Every one in the world, except us two, died last night. It is a solemn thing, but I am very happy."

They walked, Minnie and Mr. Willetts, a little distance in front of the others. Harkless could not have told afterward whether they rode or walked or floated on an airship to the courthouse. All he knew distinctly was that a divinity in a pink shirt waist and a hat that was woven of gauzy cloud by mocking fairies to make him stoop hideously to see under it dwell for the time on earth and was at his side, dazzling him in the morning sunshine. Last night the moon had lent her a silvery glamour. She had something of the ethereal whiteness of night dews in that watery light, a nymph to laugh from a sparkling fountain at the moon, or, as he thought, remembering her courtesy for his pretty speech, perhaps a little lady of King Louis's court wandering down the years from Fontainebleau and appearing to clumsy mortals sometimes of a summer night when the moon was in their heads.

But today she was of the faintest color, a pretty girl whose gray eyes twinkled to his in gay companionship. He marked how the sunshine danced across the shadows of her fair hair and seemed itself to catch a "luster" rather than impart it, and the light of the June day drifted through the gauzy hat to her face, touching it with a delicate and tender flush that came and went like the vibrating pink of early dawn. She had the divinest straight nose, tip tilted a faint, alluring trifle, and a dimple cleft her chin, "the deadliest maelstrom in the world." He thrilled through and through. He had been only vaguely conscious of the dimple in the night. It was not until he saw her by daylight that he really knew it was there.

The village hummed with life before them. They walked through shimmering air, sweeter to breathe than nectar is to drink. She caught a butterfly basking on a Jimson weed, and before she let it go held it out to him in her hand. It was a white butterfly. He asked which was the butterfly. "Bravo!" she said, tossing the captive craft above their heads and watching the small sails catch the breeze. "And so you can make little factories in the morning too. It is another courtesy you should be having from me if it weren't for the dustiness of it. Wait till we come to the board walk." She had some big pink roses at her waist. Indicating these, he answered, "In the meantime, I know very well a lad that would be blithe to accept a pretty token of any lady's high esteem."

"Will you present them to me?" "No; they might talk to you and take some of my time with you away from me."

Her eyes sparkled into his for the merest fraction of a second, and she laughed. Then she dropped his lapel, and they proceeded. She did not put the white rose in her belt, but carried it.

The square was heaving with a jostling, moving, good natured, happy and constantly increasing crowd that overflowed on Main street in both directions and whose good nature augmented in the ratio that its size increased. The streets were a kaleidoscope of many colors, and every window opening on Main street or the square was filled with eager faces. By 9 o'clock all the windows of the courthouse, in the center of the square were occupied. Here most of the damsels congregated to enjoy the spectacle of the parade, and their swains attended, posted at coils of less advantage behind the ladies. Some of the faces that peeped from the windows of the dark, old, shady courthouse were pretty, and some of them were not pretty, but nearly all of them were rosy cheeked, and all were pleasant to see because of the good cheer they kept.

Here and there, along the sidewalk below, a father worked his way through the throng, a licorice bedaubed cherub on one arm, his coat (borne with long enough) on the other, followed by a mother, with the other children hanging to her skirts and tagging exasperatingly behind, holding red and blue toy balloons and delectable candy batons of spiral shaped peppermint tightly closed, sadly sticky fingers. A thousand cries rent the air—the strutting mountebanks and gipping booth merchants, the peanut vendors, the boys with palm leaf fans for sale, the candy sellers, the popcorn peddlars, the Italian with the toy balloons that float like a cluster of colored bubbles above the heads of the crowd and the balloons that wall like a baby; the red lemonade man, shouting in the shrill voice that reaches everywhere and endures forever: "Lemo! Lemo! Five a glass! Ice cole lemo! Five cents, a nickel, a half a dime, the twentieth-potofadollah! Lemo! Ice cole lemo!"—all the vociferating harbingers of the circus crying their wares. Timid youths in shoes covered with dust through which the morning polish but dimly shone and unalterably booked by the arm to blushing maidens bought recklessly of peanuts, of candy, of popcorn, of all known sweetmeats, perchance, and forced their way to the lemonade stands, and there, all shyly, silently slipped the crimson stained ambrosia. Everywhere the hawkers dinned, and everywhere was heard the plaintive squawk of the toy balloon.

In the courthouse yard, and so signing in the very eye of the law, two swarthy, shifty looking gentlemen were operating with some greasy walnut shells and a pen what the fanciful or unsophisticated might have been pleased to call a game of chance, and the most intent spectator of the group around them was Mr. James Bardlock, the town marshal. He was simply and unofficially and earnestly interested. Thus the eye of the law may not be said to have winked upon the nefariousness now under its vision. It gazed with strong curiosity, an itch to dabble and, it must be admitted, a growing hope of profit, the game was so direct and the player so sure. Several countrymen had won small sums, and one, a charmingly rustic stranger, with a peculiar accent (he said that him and his gull should now have a smoot o' time off his winnings, though the lady was not manifested) had pocketed \$25 with no trouble at all. The two operators seemed depressed, declaring the luck against them and the Plattville people too brilliant at the game.

(Continued Next Sunday.)

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