

The Gentleman From Indiana

By BOOTH TARKINGTON

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"Upstairs and downstairs and in my lady's chamber! Just behind you, dear!"

"Turning quickly, the foreman beheld a blushing and smiling little vision, a vision with light brown hair, a vision enveloped in a light brown rain cloak and with brown gloves from which the handles of a big brown traveling bag were let fall as the vision disappeared under the cotton umbrella, while the smitten Judd Bennett reeled gasping against the station."

"Dearest," the girl cried to the old man, "you should have been looking for me between the devil and the deep sea, the parlor car and the smoker! I've given up cigars, and I've begun to study economy, so I didn't come on either!"

The drizzle and mist blew in under the top of the "cut under" as they drove rapidly into town, and bright little drops sparkled on the fair hair above the new editor's forehead and on the long lashes above the new editor's cheeks. She shook these transient gems off lightly as she paused in the doorway of the office at the top of the rickety stairway.

Mr. Schofield had just added the last touch to his decorations and managed to slide into his coat as the party came up the stairs, and now, perspiring, proud, embarrassed, he assumed an attitude at once deprecatory of his endeavors and pointedly expectant of commendations for the results. (He was a modest youth and a conscious. After his first sight of her as she stood in the doorway it was several days before he could lift his distressed eyes under the new editor's glance or, indeed, dare to avail himself of more than a hasty and furtive stare at her when her back was turned.) As she entered the room he sidled along the wall and laughed sheepishly at nothing.

Every chair in the room was ornamented with one of his blue rosettes, tied carefully and firmly to the middle of each chair back. There had been several yards of ribbon left over, and there was a hard knot of glossy satin on each of the inkstands and on the doorknobs. A blue band passing around the stovepipe lent it an antique rakishness suggestive of the chariot, and a number of streamers suspended from a hook in the ceiling encouraged a supposition that the employees of the Herald were contemplating the intricate festivities of May day. It needed no ghost to infer that these garlands had not embellished the editorial "cut," on during Mr. Harkless' activity, but, on the contrary, had been put in place that very morning. "Fisbee had not known of the decorations," and as his eye fell upon them a faint look of pain passed over his brow. But the girl examined the room with a dancing eye, and there were both tears and laughter in her heart.

"How beautiful!" she cried. "How beautiful!" She crossed the room and gave her hand to Ross. "It is Mr. Schofield, isn't it? The ribbons are delightful. I didn't know Mr. Harkless' room was so pretty."

Ross looked out of the window and laughed as he took her hand, which he shook with a long up and down motion, but he was set at better ease by her apparent unconsciousness of the fact that the decorations were for her. "Oh, it ain't much, I reckon," he replied, and continued to look out of the window and laugh.

She went to the desk and removed her gloves and laid her rain cloak over a chair near by. "Is this Mr. Harkless' chair?" she asked, and Fisbee answering that it was, she looked gravely at it for a moment, passed her hand gently over the back of it and then, throwing the rain cloak over another chair, said cheerily:

"Do you know, I think the first thing for us to do will be to dust everything very carefully?"

"You remember, I was confident she would know precisely where to begin," was Fisbee's earnest whisper in the willing ear of the long foreman. "Not an instant's indecision, was there?"

"No, sirree," replied the other, and as he went down to the pressroom to hunt for a feather duster which he thought might be found there he collared Bud Tipworthy, the devil, who, not admitted to the conclave of his superiors, was whistling on the rainy stairway.

"You hustle and find that dustbrush we need to have, Bud," said Parker. And presently as they rummaged in the nooks and crannies about the machinery he melted to his small assistant. "The paper is saved, Buddie—saved by an angel in light brown. You can tell it by the look of her."

"Geel!" said Bud.

Mr. Schofield had come, blushing, to join them. "Say, Cale, did you notice the color of her eyes?"

"Yes. They're gray."

"I thought so, too, show day and at Kedge Halloway's lecture. But say, Cale, they're kind of changeable. When she come in upstairs with you and Fisbee they were just as blue—near matched the color of our ribbons."

"Geel!" repeated Mr. Tipworthy.

When the editorial chamber had been made so neat that it almost glowed, though it could never be expected to shine as did Fisbee and Caleb Parker

and Ross Schofield that morning, the lady took her seat at the desk and looked over the few items the gentlemen had already compiled for her perusal. Mr. Parker explained many technicalities peculiar to the Carlow Herald, translated some phrases of the printing room and enabled her to grasp the amount of matter needed to fill an issue.

When Parker finished the three incompetents sat watching the little figure with the expression of hopeful and trusting terriers. She knit her brow for a second, but she did not betray an instant's indecision.

"I think we should have regular market reports," she announced earnestly. "I am sure Mr. Harkless would approve. Don't you think he would?" She turned to Parker.

"Market reports!" Mr. Fisbee exclaimed. "I should never have thought of market reports, nor do I imagine would either of my—my associates. A woman to conceive the idea of market reports!"

The editor blushed. "Why, who would, dear, if not a woman or a speculator, and I'm not a speculator, and neither are you, and that's the reason you didn't think of them. So, Mr. Parker, as there is so much pressure, and if you don't mind continuing to act as reporter as well as compositor until after tomorrow, and if it isn't too wet—you must have an umbrella—would it be too much bother if you went around to all the shops—stores, I mean—to all the grocers and the butchers and the leather place we passed, the tannery, and if there's one of those places where they bring cattle, would it be too much to ask you to stop there—and at the flour mill, if it isn't too far, and at the dry goods store—and you must take a blank book and a sharpened pencil, and will you please everything, please, and get down how much things are?"

Orders received, the impetuous Parker was departing on the instant when she stopped him with a little cry. "But you haven't any umbrella!" And she forced her own, a slender wand, upon him. It bore a cunningly wrought handle, and its fabric was of glistening silk. The foreman, unable to decline it, thanked her awkwardly, and as she turned to speak to Fisbee he bolted out of the door and ran down the steps without unfolding the umbrella, and then as he made for Mr. Martin's emporium he buttoned it securely under his long Prince Albert, determined that not a drop of water should touch and ruin so delicate a thing. Thus he carried it, triumphant, dry, through the course of his reportings of that day.

When he had gone the editor laid her hand on Fisbee's arm. "Dear," she said, "do you think you'd take cold if you went over to the hotel and made a note of all the arrivals for the last week and the departures too? I noticed that Mr. Harkless always filled two or three—sticks, isn't it?—with them and things about them, and somehow it read 'very nicely. You must ask the landlord all about them, and if there aren't any, we can take up the same amount of space lamenting the dull times, just as he used to. You see, I've read the Herald faithfully. Isn't it a good thing I always subscribed for it?" She patted Fisbee's cheek with her soft hand and laughed gayly into his mild, vague old eyes. "It won't be this scramble to 'fill up' much longer. I have plans, gentlemen, and before long we will print news; and we must buy 'plate matter' instead of patent insides; and I had a talk with the Associated Press people in Rouen, but that's for after while. And I went to the hospital this morning before I left. They wouldn't let me see him again, but they told me all about him, and he's better, and I got Tom to go to the jail, and he saw some of those beasts, and I can do a column of description besides an editorial about them, and I will be fierce enough to suit Carlow, you may believe that. And I've been talking to Senator Burns—that is, listening to Senator Burns, which is much stupider—and I think I can do an article on national politics. I'm not very well up on local issues yet, and I—" She broke off suddenly.

"There, I think we can get out tomorrow's number without any trouble. By the time you get back from the hotel, father, I'll have half my—my stuff written—written up, I mean. Take your big umbrella and go, dear, and please ask at the express office if a typewriter has come for me."

She laughed again with sheer delight, like a child, and ran to a corner and got the cotton umbrella and placed it in the old man's hand. As he reached the door she called after him, "Wait!" and went to him and knelt before him and, with the humblest, proudest grace in the world, turned up his trousers to keep them from the mud. Ross Schofield had never considered Mr. Fisbee a particularly sacred sort of person, but he did from that moment. The old man made some timid protest at the girl's action, but she answered: "The great ladies used to buckle the Chevalier Bayard's spurs for him, and you're a great deal nicer than the Chevalier. You haven't any rubbers! I don't believe any of you have any rubbers!" And not until both Fisbee and Mr. Schofield had promised to purchase overshoes at once and in the meantime not to step in any puddles would she let the former depart upon his errand. He crossed the square with the strangest, faintest step ever seen in Plattville. Solomon Tibbs had a warm argument with Miss Selina as to his identity, Miss Selina maintaining that the figure under the big umbrella—only the legs and coat tails were visible to

them—was that of a stranger, probably an Englishman.

In the Herald office the editor turned, smiling, to the paper's remaining vagabond, "Mr. Schofield, I heard some

talk in Rouen of an old company that had been formed to prospect for kerosene in Carlow county. Do you know anything about it?"

Ross, surfeited with honor, terror, and possessed by a sweet distress at finding himself tete-a-tete with the lady, looked at the wall and replied, "Oh, it's that Eph Watts' foolishness."

"Do you know if they have begun to dig for it yet?"

"Ma'am?" said Ross.

"Have they begun the diggings yet?" "No, ma'am, I think not. They've got a contraption fixed up about three mile south. I don't reckon they've begun yet, hardly. They're gittin' the machinery in place. I heard Eph say they'd begin to bore—dig. I mean, ma'am; I meant to say dig." He stopped, utterly confused and unhappy, and she understood his manly purpose and knew him for a gentleman whom she liked.

"You mustn't be too much surprised," she said, "but in spite of my ignorance about such things I mean to devote a good deal of space to the oil company. It may come to be of great importance to Carlow. We won't go into it in tomorrow's paper beyond an item or so, but do you think you could possibly find Mr. Watts and ask him for some information as to their progress and if it would be too much trouble for him to call here tomorrow afternoon or the day after? I want him to give me an interview if he will. Tell him, please, he will very greatly oblige us."

"Oh, he'll come all right," answered her companion quickly. "I'll take Tibbs' buggy and go down there right off. Eph won't lose no time gittin' here." And with this encouraging assurance he was dying forth when he, like the others, was detained by her solicitous care. She was a born mother. He protested that in the buggy he would be perfectly sheltered. Besides, there wasn't another umbrella about the place. He liked to get wet anyway; he had always loved rain. The end of it was that he went away in a sort of tremor wearing her rain cloak over his shoulders, which garment, as it covered its owner completely when she wore it, hung almost to his knees. He darted around a corner, and there, breathing deeply, tenderly removed it, then borrowing paper and cord at a neighboring store wrapped it neatly and stole back to the printing office, on the ground floor of the Herald building, and left the package in the hands of Bud Tipworthy, charging him to care for it as for his own life and not to open it, but if the lady so much as set one foot out of doors before his return to hand it to her with the message, "He borrowed another of J. Hankins'."

Left alone, the lady went to the desk and stood for a time looking gravely at Harkless' chair. She touched it gently, as she had touched it once before that morning, and then she spoke to it as if he were sitting there and as she would not have spoken had he been sitting there.

"You didn't want gratitude, did you?" she whispered, with sad lips.

Soon she smiled at the blue ribbon, patted the chair gayly on the back and, seizing upon pencil and pad, dashed into her work with rare energy. She bent low over the desk, her pencil moving rapidly. She seemed loath to pause for breath. She had covered many sheets when Fisbee returned, and as he came in softly in order not to disturb her she was so deeply engrossed that she did not hear him, nor did she look up when Parker entered, but pursued the formulation of her fast flying ideas, with the same single purpose and abandon. So the two men sat and waited while their chiefstain wrote absorbedly. At last she glanced up and made a little startled exclamation at seeing them there and then gave them cheery greeting. Each placed several scribbled sheets before her, and she, having first assured herself that Fisbee had bought his overshoes, and having expressed a fear that Mr. Parker had found her umbrella too small, as he looked damp (and indeed he was damp), cried praises on their notes and offered the reporters great applause.

"It is all so splendid!" she cried. "How could you do it so quickly? And in the rain too! It is just what we need. I've done most of the things I mentioned, I think, and made a draft of some plans for hereafter. Doesn't it seem to you that it would be a good notion to have a woman's page—'For Feminine Readers' or 'Of Interest to Women'—once a week?"

"A woman's page!" exclaimed Fisbee. "I could never have thought of that. Could you, Mr. Parker?"

Before that day was over system had been introduced, and the Herald was running on it, and all that warm rainy afternoon the editor and Fisbee worked in the editorial rooms. Parker and Bud and Mr. Schofield (after his return with the items and a courteous message from Ephraim Watts) bent over the forms downstairs, and Uncle Xenophon was cleaning the storeroom and scrubbing the floor. An extraordinary number of errands took the various members of the printing force up to see the editor in chief, literally to see the editor in chief. It was hard to believe that the presence had not down hard to keep believing without the repeated testimony of sight that the dingy room upstairs was actually the setting for their jewel, and a jewel they swore she was. The printers came down chuckling and gurgling after each interview. It was partly the thought that she belonged to the Herald, their paper. Once Ross, chuckling, looked up and caught the foreman gazing to himself.

"What in the name of common sense you laughin' at, Cale?" he asked.

"What are you laughin' at?" rejoined the other.

"I dunno!"

The day wore on, wet and dreary out-

side, but all within the Herald's bosom was snug and busy and merrimentous with the healthy thrum of life and prosperity renewed. Toward 6 o'clock, spirit accomplished, the new guiding spirit was deliberating on a policy, as Harkless would conceive a policy were he there, when Minnie Briscoe ran joyously up the stairs, plunged into the room waterproofer and radiant and caught her friend in her eager arms and put an end to policy for that day.

But policy and labor did not end at twilight every day. There were evenings, as in the time of Harkless, when lamps alone from the upper windows of the Herald building; for the little editor worked hard, and sometimes she worked late; she always worked early. She made some mistakes at first and one or two blunders which she took much more seriously than any one else did. But she found a remedy for all such results of her inexperience, and she developed experience. She set at her task with the energy of her youthfulness and no limit to her ambition, and she felt that Harkless had prepared the way for a wide expansion of the paper's interests, wider than he knew. She brought a fresh point of view to operate in a situation, where he had fallen perhaps too much in the rut, and she watched every chance with a keen eye and looked ahead of her with clear foresight. What she waited and yearned for and dreamed was the time when a copy of the new Herald should be placed in the trembling hands of the man who lay in the Rouen hospital. Then she felt if he, unaware of her identity as he was and as he was to be kept, should place everything in her hands unreservedly, that would be a tribute to her work. And how hard she would labor to deserve it.



With the humblest, proudest grace in the world.

After a time she began to see that as his representative and editor of the Herald she had become a factor in district politics. It took her breath, but with a gasp of delight, for there was something she wanted to do.

Rodney McCune had lifted his head, and the friends of his stricken enemy felt that they and the cause that Harkless had labored for were lost without the leader, for the old ring that the Herald had beaten rallied around McCune. "The boys were in line again." Every one knew that Halloway, a dull but honest man, the most available material that Harkless had been able to find, was already beaten. If John Harkless had been "on the ground to work for him," it was said, Halloway could have received the nomination again, but as matters stood he was beaten and beaten badly, and Rodney McCune would sit in congress, for nomination meant election.

But one afternoon the Harkless forces, demoralized, broken, hopeless, woke up to find that they had a leader. There was a political conference at Judge Briscoe's. The politicians descended sadly at the gate from the omnibus that had met the afternoon train—Boswell and Keating, two gentlemen of Amo, and Bence and Shannon, two others of Gaines county, to confer with Warren Smith, Tom Martin, Briscoe and Harkless' representatives, Fisbee and the editor of the Herald. They entered the house gloomily, and the conference began in defective monosyllables. But presently Minnie Briscoe, sitting on the porch pretending to sew, heard Helen's voice, clear, soft and trembling a little with excitement. She talked for only two or three minutes, but what she said seemed to stir up great commotion among the others. All the voices burst forth at once in exclamations, almost shouts. Then Minnie saw her father, seated near the window, rise and strike the table a great blow with his clenched fist. "Will I make the nominating speech?" he cried. "I'd walk from here to Rouen and back again to do it!"

"We'll swim out!" exclaimed Mr. Keating of Amo. "The wonderful thing is that nobody thought of this before. There are just two difficulties—Halloway and our man himself. He wouldn't let his name be used against Kedge. Therefore we've got to work it quietly and keep it from him."

"It's not too difficult," said the speaker's colleague, Mr. Boswell. "All we've got to do is to spring it as a surprise on the convention. Some of the old crowd themselves will be swept along with us when we make our nomination, and you want to stuff your ears with cotton. You see, all we need to do is to pass the word quietly among the Halloway people and the shaky McCune people. Rod may get wind of it, but you can't fix men in this district against us when they know what we mean to do now. On the first ballot we'll give Halloway every vote he'd have got if he'd run against McCune alone. It will

help him to understand how things were afterward. On the second ballot—why, we nominate. Of course it can't be helped that Halloway has to be kept in the dark, too, but he's got to be."

"There's one danger," said Warren Smith, "Kedge Halloway is honest, but I believe he's selfish enough to disturb his best friend's deathbed for his own ends. It's not unlikely that he will get nervous toward the last and be telegraphing Harkless to have himself carried on a cot to the convention to save him. That wouldn't do at all, of course. And Miss Sherwood thinks maybe there'd be less danger if we set the convention a little ahead of the day appointed. It's dangerous, because it shortens our time, but we can fix it for three days before the day we'd settled on, and that will bring it to Sept. 7."

"It's a great plan," said Mr. Bence, who was an oratorical gentleman. He thrust one hand in his breast, raised the other toward heaven and continued, "For the name of Harkless shall!"

(Continued Next Sunday.)

The Diamond Cure.

The latest news from Paris is that they have discovered a diamond cure for consumption. If you fear consumption or pneumonia, it will, however, be best for you to take that great remedy mentioned by W. T. McGee, of Vanleet, Tenn. "I had a cough for fourteen years. Nothing helped me until I took Dr. King's New Discovery for Consumption coughs and colds, which gave instant relief, and effect a permanent cure." Unequaled quick cure for throat and lung troubles. At Chas. Rogers drug store; price 50 cents and \$1.00. Trial bottle free.

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