

A GENTLEMAN FROM MISSISSIPPI

By THOMAS A. WISE
Novelized from the Play by Frederick R. Toombs

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CHAPTER XXIV. THE HONEYBIRD.

In the African jungle dwells a pretty little bird that lives on honey. The saccharine dainty is there found in the hollows of trees and under the bark, where what is known as the carpenter bee bores and deposits his extract from the buds and blossoms of the tropical forest. The bird is called the "honeybird" because it is a sure guide to the deposits of the delicacy. The bird dislikes the laborious task of pecking its way through the bark to reach the honey, and so, wise in the ways of men, it procures help. It locates a nest of honey, then flies about until it sees some natives or hunters, to whom it shows itself. They know the honeybird and know that it will lead them to the treasure store. Following the bird, which flits just in advance, they reach the cache of dripping sweetness and readily lay it open with hatchets or knives. Taking what they want, there is always enough left clinging to the tree and easily accessible to satisfy the appetite of the clever little bird.

Senator Stevens of Mississippi bears a marked resemblance to the honeybird—so much so that he has well won the bird's appellation for himself. Abnormally keen at locating possibilities for extracting "honey" from the governmental affairs in Washington, he invariably led Peabody, representing the hunter with the ax, to the repository. He would then rely on the Pennsylvania's superior force to break down the barriers. Stevens would flutter about and gather up the leavings.

Equally as mercenary as "the boss of the senate," he lacked Peabody's iron nerve, determination, resourcefulness and daring. He needed many hours of sleep. Peabody could work twenty hours at a stretch. He had to have his meals regularly or else suffer from indigestion. Peabody sometimes did a day's work on two boiled eggs and a cup of coffee.

The senior senator from Mississippi had been the first to point out to Peabody the possibilities for profit in the naval base project, but the morning following the conference with Stei- nert when he rejoined them for breakfast at the Louis Napoleon he was far from comfortable. He did not mind fighting brains against brains, even though unprincipled methods were resorted to, but indications were that more violent agencies would be called into play owing to the complications that had arisen.

Stevens ate heartily to strengthen his courage. Stei- nert ate hugely to strengthen his body. Peabody ate scarcely anything at all—to strengthen his brain. Waving away the hotel waiter who had brought the breakfast to his apartment, Senator Peabody outlined the probable campaign of the day.

"If our best efforts to weaken and scare off Langdon fall today," he said, "it will naturally develop that we must render it impossible in some way for him to appear in the senate at all, or we must delay his arrival until after the report of the committee on naval affairs has been made. In either event he would not have another opportunity to speak on that subject."

"Of course later, at 12:30, we will know his plan of action. Then we can act to the very point, but we must be prepared for any situation that can arise."

"Cannot the president of the senate be persuaded not to recognize Langdon on the floor? Then we could adjourn and shut him off," asked Stevens.

"No," responded Peabody; "he has already promised Langdon to recognize him, and the president of the senate cannot be persuaded to break his word. I am painfully aware of this fact."

But Stevens was not yet dissuaded from the hope of defeating the junior senator from Mississippi by wit alone.

"Can we not have a speaker get the floor before Langdon and have him talk for hours—tire out the old kicker—and await a time when he leaves the senate chamber to eat or talk to some visitor we could have call on him, then shove the bill through summarily?" he suggested.

"I've gone over all that," answered Peabody quickly. "It would only be able to move that old codger away from the senate chamber with a team of oxen—once he gets to his seat. His secretary, Haines—another oversight of yours, Stevens—the latter winced—will warn him. Langdon would stick plus through his eyelids to keep from falling asleep."

slowly, "that a little fine-esse like this might keep him away: When Lang-



"Unless you got the right kind of woman," don's in his committee room before going to the senate send him a telegram signed by some of his friends' name that one of his daughters is dyin' from injuries in a automobile collision a few miles out a town. That ud'—

"Ridiculous," snorted Peabody. "He'd know where they were. They're always—"

"Huh, then put in more fine-esse."

"How, what?"

"Hev some'un take 'em out a-town. That ud'—"

"No, no, man!" snapped Peabody. "They'd stick in town to hear their father's wonderful speech."

"Well," went on the lobbyist, "I'll hev Langd'n watched by a careful picked man, a nigger that won't talk. He'll pick a row with the colonel on some street, say, 'w'en he's comin' from his home after lunch. The coon kin bump into Langd'n an' call him names. Then w'en ole fireworks salls into 'im, yellin' about what 'ed do in Mississippi, the coon pulls a gun on the colonel an' fires a couple o' shots random. Cops come up, an' our pertickeler copper 'll lug Langd'n away as a witness, refusin' to believe 'es a senator. I kin arrange to hev him kept in the cooler a couple o' hours without gettin' any word out, or I'll hev 'im entered up as drunk an' disorderly. He'll look drunk, he'll be so mad."

"But the negro—how could you get a man to undergo arrest on such a serious charge, attempted murder?" exclaimed Stevens.

"There, there," said Stei- nert patronizingly; "coons has more genteel home life in jail than they does out. An' don't forget the District of Columbia is governed by folks that ain't residents of it, only durin' the session. The politicians don't leave their fren's in the cooler very long. Say, Senator Stevens, are you kiddin' me? Is it any different down in your—"

The Mississippian choked and spluttered over a gulp of unusually hot coffee, and Peabody again decided Stei- nert to be on the wrong tack.

"That proceeding would attract too much attention from the newspapers," he added.

"Well, I thought you wanted to win," grunted Stei- nert. "I've been offerin' you good stuff, too—new stuff. None of yer druggin' with chloroform or ticklin' with blackjacks. Why, I've gone from fine-esse to common sense. But, come to think of it, how about some woman? I e'n get one to introduce to—"

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"Unless you got the right kind of a woman," went on Stei- nert.

Senator Stevens choked some more.

"The boss of the senate" sank down in his chair, crossed one knee over the other and drummed his fingers lightly on the table. He gazed thoughtfully at Stevens.

"Yes," he observed slowly, "unless you've got the right sort of a woman."

Rising, he led the Mississippian to one side.

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ment as Peabody whispered to him. "It's all right. It's all right," he then heard the Pennsylvania say irritably. "She'll understand. She can be trusted. She expects you."

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