

A GENTLEMAN FROM MISSISSIPPI

By THOMAS A. WISE

Novelized From the Play by Frederick R. Toombs

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CHAPTER XVIII.

HOPE LANGDON'S HOUR OF TRIUMPH

HAINES sat at a table in the reception room, across from Hope Georgia, and his gratitude for her battle in his favor mingled with a realization of qualities in this young lady that he had never before noticed. Probably he did not know that what he had really seen in her that day and that evening was the sudden transition from girlhood to womanhood, her casting aside of thoughtless, irresponsible youth and the shouldering of the responsibilities of the grown woman who would do her share in the world's work.



She would do her share in the world's work.

He stared across in astonishment at this slip of a girl who had outwitted two resourceful men and an older sister of unquestioned abilities.

"I do not recognize you, Miss Hope," he said finally.

"Perhaps you never looked at me before," she suggested archly, feeling instinctively that this was her hour; that the man she loved was at this moment thinking more about her than of anything else in the world.

Haines made a gesture of regret. "That must be it," he agreed. Then he leaned forward eagerly. "But I'm looking at you now, and I like looking at you. I like what you've done for me."

"Oh, that was nothing, Mr. Haines," she exclaimed airily, her intuition telling her of her way over the man. "Nothing!" he exclaimed. "Well, it's more than any one ever did for me before. I've known lots of girls."

"I don't doubt that, Mr. Haines," Hope interjected, with a light laugh.

"Yes, I say I've known lots of girls, but there's never been one who showed herself such a true friend as you have been. There's never been any one who believed in me this way when I was practically down and out."

"Perhaps you've never been down and out before, Mr. Haines, so they never had a chance to show whether they believed in you or not."

"That may be one reason," he answered. "I wonder why?" he paused—"I wonder why your sister Carolina did not believe in me."

"You were quite fond of her, weren't you?" the girl began, then stopped and turned away her head.

Haines gazed curiously at Hope. "I was, yes. I even thought I loved her, but I soon saw my mistake. It wasn't love. It was only a kind of—"

Suddenly pausing, Bud Haines shot a swift glance at the girl.

"What wonderful hair you have, Miss Hope."

The girl smiled invitingly. "Think so?"

"Yes," he declared earnestly. "I know so. I never noticed it before, but I guess lots of fellows down in Mississippi have."

Hope's tantalizing smile worried him. "I hope you are not secretly engaged too!" he exclaimed.

"No, oh, no!" she answered quickly before she thought.

"Or in love?" he asked seriously.

Haines had stood up and was now leaning intently over the table. He realized the difference between the feeling he had had for Carolina and the tender emotion that thrilled him as he thought of the sweet girl before him. This time he knew he was not mistaken. He knew that he truly loved Hope Langdon.

"Or in love?" he asked again, anxious at her silence.

Hope looked at him slowly. A faint blush illumined her face.

"Oh, don't let's talk about me," she exclaimed.

"But I want to talk about you," he cried. "I don't want to talk about anything else. I must talk about you, and"

rough for me when everybody else was fighting against me. You've shown that you think I am honest and worthy of a woman's faith. You fought your own family for me. Nobody has ever done for me what you have, and—"

He faltered, full of what he was about to say.

"And you're grateful," she ended. He looked her squarely in the eyes as though to fathom her thoughts. Then he reached toward the girl and seized both her hands.

"Grateful nothing!" he cried. "I'm not grateful. I'm in love—in love with you. I want you—want you as I never wanted anything or anybody before, and I tell you I'm going to have you. Do you hear?"

Hope could not hide her agitation. The light in her eyes showed she was all a woman.

"Oh, nothing in the world could happen as quickly as that, Mr. Haines!" she protested, with her last attempt at archness.

"Nothing could?" he threatened. "I'll show you."

He advanced quickly around the table, but the girl darted just beyond his grasp. Then she paused—and her lover gathered her in his arms.

"Hope, my dear; you are my own," was all he could say as he lent over to kiss the lips that were not refused to him.

Hope released herself from his fervent grasp.

"I love you, I do love you," she said fondly. "I believe in you, and father must too. You've got to straighten this tangle out now, for my sake as well as your own. Father will listen."

"It's all so strange, so wonderful, I can hardly understand it," began Haines slowly as he held the girl's hands.

Unknown to both, the door leading from the hall had opened to admit Senator Langdon into the lower end of the room. Surprised at the sight of the couple, so seriously intent on each other, he made a sudden gesture of anger, then, apparently changing his mind, advanced toward them.

"I believe you want to see me, sir," he said to Haines. "I hope you'll be brief. I have very little time to spare from my guests."

Hope's bosom fluttered timorously at the interruption. The man nervously stepped forward.

"I shan't take much of your time, Senator Langdon," he said. "There has been a misunderstanding, a terrible mistake. I am sure I can convince you."

Senator Langdon hesitated doubtfully, half turned toward Carolina, Randolph and Norton, who had followed him, and again faced Haines.

Hope pressed her father's arm and looked up into his face entreatingly. Randolph, observing this, quickly stepped close to the senator's side, saying, "I can settle with this Mr. Haines for you."

Waving his son aside, the senator finally spoke.

"I reckon there's been too many attending to my business and settling my affairs, Randolph," he said. "I think for a change I'll settle a few of my own. All of you children go out and leave me here with Mr. Haines."

CHAPTER XIX.

SENATOR LANGDON LEARNS THE TRUTH. WHEN they were alone Haines faced the senator and spoke determinedly.

"They told you I was not running straight," he said.

The senator nodded, and the lines about his mouth deepened.

"Yes."

Bud Haines stiffened at the word. Every muscle in his body seemed to become rigid as he mentally vowed that he would retaliate against his traducers if it cost him his life to do it.

Hope had informed him only too accurately, he now realized. Little did the senator know that what he was now about to hear would give him one of the severest shocks of his life.

"They told me you weren't running straight," said Haines deliberately. "Now, neither one of us has been crooked, but somebody else has been, and this was the plan to keep us apart."

"Norton told me you were speculating in Altacoola lands," said Langdon. "And Norton told me the same of you," retorted Bud.

The senator's face grew very serious. "But my daughter, Miss Carolina Langdon, confirmed Norton's story."

Haines here faced the most difficult part of his interview. He hardly knew how to answer. His manhood rebelled against placing any blame on a woman. He revolted at the thought of ruining a father's faith in his daughter's honesty, especially when that father was the man he most admired, a man for whom he had genuine, deep rooted affection. But it was necessary that the words be spoken.

"I hate to tell you, sir," he said in a low, uncertain voice, "that it was your daughter Carolina who made me believe this story told about you and vouched for by your son Randolph."

Langdon started back aghast. He stared at Haines and knew that he spoke the truth. Then his white head

sank pathetically. Tears welled into the eyes of the planter, and this sturdy old fighting man dropped weakly into a chair, sobbing convulsively, broken in spirit and wearied in body.

At length Haines spoke to his stricken chief.

"I know it hurts," he said. "It hurt me to have to say it. Don't believe it until you get it out of Norton, but then you must do something."

Langdon came to his feet, mopping his cheeks. But there was no weakness in him now. Yes, he would do something. He would go after the thieves that had turned his own flesh and blood against him and root them all out—show them all up.

"Oh, I'll do something," he said grimly. "I'm going to make up for lost time. Of course Norton is speculating. Who's behind him?"

"Stevens and Peabody, I'm positive," answered Haines, "and behind them is Standard Steel."

"What," exclaimed Langdon, "Stevens in a swindle like this! Are you sure? How do you know?"

"A Gulf City man who couldn't carry his liquor gave me some clues, and I worked Norton into telling some more," answered the secretary. "Where is Peabody?"

"He's here now."

"Then he hasn't got my letter yet. I sent him a note and signed your name, senator, to the effect that the Gulf City claims have been brought before you so strongly that you might vote for Gulf City."

Langdon was amazed.

"You sent that note," he exclaimed, "when you know Altacoola is the only proper place and Gulf City is a mud bank?"

The newspaper man smiled.

"Of course," he agreed, "but I had to get a rise out of Peabody. This will show where he stands."

"Oh," said Langdon, "I understand. Thanks, boy."

A servant entered with a note.

"For Senator Peabody, sir, marked 'Urgent.' The messenger's been hunting him for some hours."

Langdon looked shrewdly at Bud, then turned to the servant.

"You keep that note until I ring for you, then bring it to Senator Peabody. Understand? No matter how urgent it's marked."

The man bowed.

"Yes, sir."

"Now tell Mr. Norton, Miss Langdon and Mr. Randolph to come here."

The senator turned back to his secretary.

"I expect I'm going to be pretty busy the rest of the evening, Bud, so in case I forget to mention it again remember to show up at your old desk in the morning."

"I will. Thank you, sir."

"You sent for us, senator," said Norton, approaching with his two dupes.

"You are interested in Altacoola lands," the senator angrily charged.

"I am, sir," he said.

"And you told Mr. Haines that I was interested in Altacoola lands?"

The schemer hesitated, and the senator broke in on him in rage.

"Speak out, man! Tell the truth, if you can."

"I did," admitted the congressman finally.

"Was there any particular reason for your not telling the truth?" demanded the Mississippian in threatening tone.

"I told the truth," replied Norton. "You are interested in them."

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INSANE FROM ASSAULT AT LAKE CELEBRATION

From La Grande Observer. Driven to insanity, either temporary or permanent, are the sensational yet sad developments of the work done to Oscar Lineberger, the Ladd Canyon deaf mute, by thugs at Joseph a few days ago. At least, such is the supposed reason for the evidence of insanity shown by the patient who has been at the Grande Ronde hospital since the assault at Joseph and who until Monday was believed improving rapidly.

A hearing was held Monday afternoon, following complaints from attendants who had Lineberger in charge at the hospital. The hospital officials this morning were convinced that Lineberger was demented and reported their findings to the officials, the hearing following.

The sufferer is quite violent. It requires two men using constant attention to keep him from personal injury. The guards will arrive Tuesday morning, according to present plans.

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YOUNG GIRLS DANGER.

From Emporia (Kan.) Gazette.

The mothers of the town have had a lesson—but it doesn't seem to have done them any good. There are just as many girls gadding around town after school now, getting their mail from private boxes in the local post office as there were ten years ago. Two years ago the Gazette went after the mothers of Emporia for neglecting their daughters and the result was that half a dozen private mail boxes were discontinued and a lot of little girls that were in the habit of gadding too much were kept in for a time.

These girls are now developing into fine young women, but another crop of gadding girls has come on and the Gazette hopes no one's modesty will be shocked by saying that these little flirts ought to be spanked. They are between 14 and 17 years old and are just so overlastingly boy struck that they can't sit still. If their mothers knew the type of boys and men the girls are running with

their mothers would throw fits.

But their mothers know nothing of the situation. They think their little girls are so sweet and pure that nothing can harm them. The truth is that these children are made of the same kind of mud that we are all made of and they are just as liable to temptation as older people and a thousand times less experienced. And their mothers let them gad the streets in the evening and flirt with all kinds of men, and then their mothers wonder how the devil got them and think the girls must "take after their father." There are just two things that will keep girls straight at that age, one is plain clothes and the other is home duties. The girls who make fools of themselves in Emporia are invariably overdressed. They wear duds that women of 30 should hesitate about wearing.

Thirty round-trip tickets were sold to La Grande, Friday, the circus being the attraction.

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"No one has believed in me but you." I'm going to talk whether you want to hear or not. You've believed in me when nobody else believed. You've