

# A GENTLEMAN FROM MISSISSIPPI

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

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## CHAPTER XXII.

### LOBBYISTS—AND ONE IN PARTICULAR.

WASHINGTON has known many lobbyists in its time, and it keeps on knowing them. The striking increase in legislation that aims to restrict unlawful or improper practices in business, the awakening of the public conscience, has caused a greater demand than ever for influence at the national capital, for these restrictive measures must be either killed or emasculated to a point of uselessness by that process which is the salvation of many a corrupt manipulator, the process of amendment.

Predatory corporations, predatory business associations of different sorts and predatory individuals have their representatives on the field at Washington to ward off attack by any means that brains can devise or money procure and to obtain desired favors at a cost that will leave a profitable balance for the purchaser. When commercial tricksters, believing in the lobbyists' favorite maxim, "The People Forget," feel that they have outlived the latest reform movement and see "the good old days" returning, the professional politicians introduce a few reform measures themselves, most stringent measures. They push these measures ahead until somebody pays up, then the bills die. The lobbyist knows all about these "strike" bills, but does not frown on them. No, no. Perhaps he helped draw up one of these bills so that, with the aid of his inside knowledge of his employer's business, the measure is made to give a greater scare than might otherwise have resulted. The bigger the scare the bigger the fund advanced, of course, for the lobbyist to handle. All this also helps the lobbyist to secure and retain employment.

Not all the Washington lobbyists are outside of congress. The senator or congressman has unequalled facilities for oiling or blocking the course of a bill. Sometimes he confines himself to the interests of his own clients, whoever they may be. But sometimes he notices a bill that promises to be a pretty good thing for the client of some other member if it passes. Then he begins to fight this bill so actively that he must be "let in on the deal" himself. This is very annoying to the other member, but the experience is worth something. He has learned the value of observing other people's legislation.

The outsiders (members of the "third house") and the insiders have a bond of freemasonry uniting them; they exchange information as to what members of both houses can be "reached," how they can be "got to" (through whom) and how much they want. This information is carefully tabulated, and now prices for passing or defeating legislation can be quoted to interested parties just as the price of a carload of pork can be ascertained at a given time and place. Perhaps it is this system that leads grafting members of short experience to wonder how knowledge of their taking what is termed "the sugar" got out and became known to their associates. Did they not have pledge of absolute secrecy? Yes, but the purchaser never intended to keep the information from those of his kind. Lobbyists must be honest with each other.

Not all lobbyists are men. The woman legislative agent has been known to occupy an important position in Washington, and she does yet. She is hard to detect and frequently more unprincipled than the men similarly engaged, if that is possible.

A woman with a measure of social standing would naturally prove the most successful as a lobbyist in Washington because of the opportunities her position would afford her to meet people of prominence. And just such a one was Mrs. Cora Spangler, with whom the Langdons had been thrown in contact quite intimately since their arrival at the capital.

Pretty and vivacious, Mrs. Spangler bore her thirty-seven years with uncommon ease, aided possibly by the makeup box and the modiste. Her dinners and receptions were attended by people of acknowledged standing. Always a lavish spender of money, this was explained as possible because of a fortune left her by her late husband, Congressman Spangler of Pennsylvania. That this "fortune" had consisted largely of stock and bonds of a bankrupt copper smelting plant in Michigan remained unknown, except to her husband's family, one or two of her own relatives and Senator Peabody, who, coming from Pennsylvania, had known her husband intimately.

He it was who had suggested to her that she might make money easily by cultivating the acquaintance of the new members of both houses and their families, exerting her influence in various "perfectly legitimate ways," he argued, for or against matters pending in legislation. The Standard Steel corporation kept Mrs. Spangler well supplied with funds deposited monthly to her account in a Philadelphia trust company.

She avoided suspicion by reason of her sex and her many acquaintances of undoubted rank. Senator Peabody was never invited to her home, had

never attended a single dinner, reception or musicale she had given, all of which was a part of the policy they had mutually agreed on to deaden any suspicion that might some time arise as to her relation to the Standard Steel company. It was well known that Peabody had been put into the senate by Standard Steel to look after its interests.

He had found Mrs. Spangler chiefly valuable thus far as a source of information regarding the members of congress, which she obtained largely from their families. He was thus able to gain an idea of their associations, their particular interests and their aspirations in coming to congress, which proved of much use to him in forming and promoting acquaintances, all for the glory of Standard Steel.

Senator Holcomb of Missouri told Mrs. Spangler at an afternoon tea confidentially that he was going to vote against the ship subsidy bill. Senator Peabody was informed of this

two hours later by a note written in cipher. When the vote was called two days later Senator Holcomb voted for the bill, Standard Steel supplies steel for ocean liners, and their building must be encouraged.

Mrs. Windsor, wife of Congressman Windsor of Indiana, remarked to Mrs. Spangler at a reception that she was "so glad Jimmie is going to do something for us women at last. He says we ought to get silk gowns ever so much cheaper next year."

Jimmie Windsor was a member of the house committee on ways and means and was busily engaged in the matter of tariff revision. When President Anders of the Federal Silk company heard from Senator Peabody that Windsor favored lowering the tariff on silk a way was found to convince the congressman that the American silk industry was a weakling and many investors would suffer if the foreign goods should be admitted any cheaper than at present.

President Anders would be willing to do Senator Peabody a favor some day.

Sometimes Cora Spangler shuddered at the thought of what would become of her if she should make some slip, some fatal error, and be discovered by her friends as a betrayer of confidences for money. A secret agent of Standard Steel! What a newspaper story she would make—"Society Favorite a Paid Spy!" "Woman Lobbyist Flees Capital." The sensational headlines flitted through her mind. Then she would grit her teeth and dig her finger nails into her palms. She had to have money to carry on the life she loved so well. She must continue as she had begun. After all, she reasoned, nothing definite could ever be proved regarding the past. Let the future care for itself. She might marry again and free herself from this mode of life, who knows?

So reasoned Cora Spangler for the hundredth time during the last two years as she sat in her boudoir at her home. She had spent part of the day with Carolina and Hope Langdon and in the evening had attended the musicale at their house. But she had been forced to leave early owing to a severe headache. Now, after an hour or two of rest, she felt better and was about to retire. Suddenly the telephone bell rang at a

writing table. "Hello! Who is it?"

"Hello! Who is it?"

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near a window. She had two telephones, one in the lower hall and one in her boudoir—to save walking downstairs unnecessarily, she explained to her woman friends. But the number of this upstairs telephone was not in the public book. It had a private number, known to but two people except herself.

Taking down the receiver, she asked in low voice, "Hello, who is it?"

"Mr. Wall."

It was the name Senator Peabody used in telephone conversation with her.

"Yes, congressman!" she responded. She always said "Yes, congressman," in reply to "Mr. Wall," a prearranged manner of indicating that he was talking to the desired person.

"I will need your services tomorrow," Senator Peabody said, "on a very important matter, I am afraid. Decline any engagements and hold yourself in readiness."

"Yes."

"I may send my friend S. to explain things at 10:30 in the morning. If he does not arrive at that time, telephone me at 10:35 sharp. You know where. Understand? I have put off going to Philadelphia tonight."

"Yes."

"That is all; goodbye."

"Something very important," she murmured nervously as she turned from the desk.

"I don't like his tone of voice; sounds strained and worried—something unusual for the cold, flinty gentleman from Pennsylvania. And his friend S., of course, means Stevens! Great heavens, then Stevens must now have knowledge of my—my—business!"

She calmed herself and straightened a dainty, slender finger against her cheek.

"It must be something about that naval base bill, I'm sure. That's been worrying Peabody all session," she mused as she pressed a button to summon her maid.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### "THE BOSS OF THE SENATE" GAINS A NEW ALLY.

MRS. SPANGLER would have flattered herself on guessing correctly as to Senator Peabody's uneasiness had she heard and seen all that had taken place in his apartment at the Louis Napoleon hotel, where he had hurriedly taken Senator Stevens on leaving the Langdon house.

Not only would the two senators lose their immense profits on the Alacoola transaction if Langdon persisted in his opposition, but they would lose as well the thousands of dollars spent by their agents in purchasing options on hundreds of acres and, where they could not get options, the land itself. This land would be on their hands, unsalable, if the base went somewhere else. Moreover, they feared that Langdon's revolt would bring unpleasant newspaper publicity to their operations.

"There's only one course to pursue, Stevens," snapped Peabody as they took off their overcoats. "That is to be prepared as best we can for the very worst and meet it in some way yet to be determined. But first we must try to figure out what Langdon is going to do—what it can be that he says he will tell us tomorrow at 12:30 if we appear. He must have something very startling up his sleeve if he makes good his assertions. I can't see how—"

"Nor I," frowned Stevens, "and my political eyesight is far better than that fool Langdon's. Under ordinary circumstances we could let him go ahead with his minority report for Gulf City, but as things stand he'll have every newspaper reporter in Washington buzzing around and asking impertinent questions—"

"Yes, and you and I would have to go to Paris to live with our life insurance friends from New York, wouldn't we?" laughed Peabody sarcastically. "I'm going to send for Jake Steinhart," he added.

"Steinhart?" Stevens ejaculated. "What?"

"Oh, that's all right. Maybe he can suggest something," said Peabody, going to the telephone. "We've too much at stake to make a mistake, and Jake may see a point that we've overlooked. Luckily I saw him downstairs in the grill room as we came through to the elevator."

"Steinhart is all right himself," confessed Stevens, "but his methods—"

"Can't be too particular now about his methods—or ours, Stevens, when a bull like Langdon breaks loose in the political china shop. Fortune and reputation are both fragile."

A ring of a bell announced the arrival of Jake Steinhart, whose reputation as a lobbyist of advanced ability had spread wide in the twenty years he

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had spent in Washington. Of medium height, sallow complexion, dark hair and dark eyes, his broad shoulders filled the doorway as he entered. An ill-kept mustache almost hid a thin-lipped, forceful mouth, almost as forceful as some of the language he used. His eyes darted first to Peabody and then to Stevens, waiting for either of them to open the conversation.

The highest class lobbyists, those who "swing" the "biggest deals," concern themselves only with men who can "handle" or who control lawmakers. They get regular reports and outline the campaign. Like crafty spiders they hide in the center of a great web, a web of bribery, threat, cajolery and intrigue, intent on every victim that is lured into the glistening meshes.

Only the small fry mingle freely with the legislators in the open, in the hotels and cafes and in the capitol corridors.

Jake Steinhart did not belong in either of these classes; he ranked somewhere between the biggest and the smallest. He coupled colossal boldness with the most expert knowledge of all the intricate workings of the congressional mechanism. Given money to spend among members to secure the defeat of a bill, he would frequently put most of the money in his own pocket and for a comparatively small sum defeat it by influencing the employees through whose hands it must pass.

"Sit down, Jake. Something to drink?" asked Peabody, reaching for a decanter.

"No," grunted the lobbyist; "don't drink durin' business hours; only durin' the day."

"Well, Jake," said the Pennsylvanian, "you probably know something of what's going on in the naval affairs committee."

"You mean the biggest job of the session?"

"Yes."

"Sure thing, senator. It's the work of an artist."

"The boss of the senate" smiled grimly.

"Now, suppose a committeeman named Langdon absolutely refused to

"Come, come, man," was the irritable retort. "I never let a few dollars stand between myself and my friends."

"All right, senator."

The lobbyist thrust himself down in his chair, puffed slowly at a cigar and gazed thoughtfully at the ceiling.

"Few years ago," he began after a minute or two, "there was a feller who was goin' to

sneak about a bond issue. He had his speech all ready to warn the country that he thought a crowd of the pluto-craze was goin' to get the bonds to resell to the public at advanced rates. Well, sir, I arranged to have a

"He was at the insane asylum."

carriage, call that night to take him to see the president, for he was told the president sent the carriage for him. When he got out he was at the insane asylum, an' I can tell you he was bundled into a padded cell in jg time, where he stayed for three days. 'He thinks he's a member of congress,' I told the two huskies that handled him an' gave 'em each a twenty case note. The doctor that signed the necessary papers got considerable more."

Stevens' gasp of amazement caused the narrator genuine enjoyment.

"I know of a certain senator who was drunk an' laid away in a Turkish bath when the roll was called on a certain bill. He was a friend of Peabody's," laughed the lobbyist to the Mississippian.

"But in his case," said Stevens, "we must be very careful. Possibly some of your methods in handling the men you go after—"

"Say," interposed Steinhart, "you know I don't do no pursuin', all the goin' after, any more than others in my business. Why, senator, some of these congressmen worry the life out of us folks that sprinkle the sugar. They accuse us of not lettin' 'em in on things when they haven't been fed in some time. They come down the trail like greyhounds coursing a coyote."

The speaker paused and glanced across at Peabody, who, however, was too busily engaged in writing in a memorandum book to notice him.

"Why, Senator Stevens," went on the lobbyist, "only today a down east member held me up to tell me that he was strong for that proposition to give the A. K. and L. railroad grants

or government timber land in Oregon. He says to me, he says: 'What 'n hell do my constituents in New England care about things way 'em on the Pacific coast? I'd give 'em Yellowstone National park for a freight ship!' If 'twas any use to 'em,' he says. 'So you see'—"

"I must go," broke in Stevens, rising and glancing at his watch. "It will soon be daylight."

"If you must have sleep, go, but you must be here at 9 o'clock sharp in the morning," said Peabody. "Steinhart will sleep here with me. We'll all have breakfast together here in my

rooms and a final consultation."

"You won't plan anything really desperate, Peabody, will you? I think I'd rather—"

"Nonsense, Stevens, of course not. Our game will be to try to weaken Langdon, to prove to him in the morning that he alone will suffer, because our names do not appear in

the land deals. The options were signed and the deeds signed by our agents. Don't you see? Whereas his daughter and son and future son-in-law actually took land in their own names."

"How clumsy!"

"Yes. Such amateurism lowers the dignity of the United States senate," Peabody answered dryly.

"But suppose Langdon does not weaken?" asked Stevens anxiously as he picked up his hat and coat.

"Then we will go into action with our guns loaded," was the reply.

(Continued next week.)

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be taken care of and insisted on handling in a minority report tomorrow, with a speech that read like the Declaration of Independence?"

Steinhart jerked his head forward quickly.

"You mean what would I do if I was—er—if I was runnin' the job?"

"Yes."

Steinhart leaned toward Peabody. "Where do I come in on this?" he asked suspiciously.

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