

# The Gentleman From Indiana

By BOOTH TARKINGTON

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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



She fastened her rose in place of the white one.

the small sails catch the breeze. "And so you can make little flatteries 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."

"But you have one already, a very beautiful one." She gave him a genial up and down glance from head to foot, half quizzical and half applauding, but so quick he scarcely saw it, and he was glad he had resurrected the straw hat with the youthful ribbon and his other festive vestures. "And a very becoming flower a white rose is," she continued, "though I am a bold girl to be blarneying with a young gentleman I met no longer ago than last night."

"But why shouldn't you blarney with a gentleman when you began by saving his life?"

"Especially when the gentleman had the politeness to gallop about the county with me tucked under his arm." She stood still and laughed softly, but consummately, and her eyes closed tight with the mirth of it. She had taken one of the roses from her waist, and as she stood holding it by the long stem its cool petals lightly pressed her lips.

"You may have it—in exchange," she said. He bent down to her, and she fastened her rose in place of the white one in his coat. She did not ask him, directly or indirectly, who had put the white one there for him. She knew by the way it was pinned that he had done it himself. "Who is it that every morning brings me these lovely flowers?" she burlesqued as he bent over her.

"Mr. Wimby," he returned. "I will point him out to you. You must see him and Mr. Bodeffer, who is the oldest inhabitant and the crosser of Carroll."

"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 dancels congregated to enjoy the spectacle of the parade. Signs of less vantage 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 florice 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 striped peppermint in tightly closed, sadly sticky fingers. A thousand cries rent the air—the strutting mountebanks and gypsying booth merchants, the peanut vendors, the boys with palm leaf fans for sale, the candy sellers, the popcorn peddlers, the Italian with the toy balloons that float like a cluster of colored bubbles above the heads of the crowd and the balloons that wail 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 looked 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 sipped the crimson stained ambrosia. Everywhere the hawkers dined, and everywhere was heard the plaintive squawk of the toy balloon.

In the courthouse yard, and so singing in the very eye of the law, two swarthy, shifty looking gentlemen were operating with some greasy walnut shells and a pea 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 goil should now have a smoot' old 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.

It was wonderful how the young couples worked their way arm in arm through the thickest crowds, never separating. Even at the lemonade stands they drank holding the glasses in their outer hands. Such are the sacrifices demanded by etiquette. But, observing the gracious outpouring of fortune upon the rare rustic just mentioned, a youth in a green tie disengaged his arm—for the first time in two hours—from that of a girl who looked upon him with fond, uncertain smiles and, conducting her to a corner of the yard, bade her remain there until he returned. He had to speak to Hartley Bowlder, he explained.

Then he plunged, red faced and excited, into the circle about the shell manipulators and offered to lay a wager.

"Hol' on there, Hen Fentriss," thickly objected a flushed young man beside him. "Iss my turn."

"I'm first, Hartley," returned the other. "You can hold yer hosses, I reckon."

"Plenty fer each and all, gents," interrupted one of the shell men. "Place yer spondulies on de little ball. Which is de nex' lucky gent to win our money? Gent bets four sixty-five he seen de little ball go under de middle shell. Up she comes! Dis time we wins. Plattville can't win every time. Who's de nex' lucky gent?"

Fentriss edged slowly out of the circle, abashed and with rapidly whitening cheeks. He paused for a moment outside, slowly realizing that all his money had gone in one wild, blind whirl—the money he had earned so hard and saved so hard to make a holiday for his sweetheart and himself. He stole one glance around the building to where a patient figure waited for him. Then he fled down a side alley and soon was out upon the country road, tramping suddenly homeward through the dust, his chin sunk in his breast and his hands clinched tight at his sides. Now and then he stopped and bitterly hurled a stone at a piping bird on the fence or gay bobwhite in the fields. At noon the patient figure was still waiting in the corner of the courthouse yard, neck-

ly twisting a coral ring upon her finger.

But the flushed young man who had spoken thickly to her deserter drew an envied roll of bank bills from his pocket and began to bet with tipsy caution, while the circle about the gamblers watched with fervid interest, especially Mr. Bardlock, town marshal.

From far up Main street came the cry "She's a comin'! She's a comin'!" and this announcement of the parade proving only one of a dozen false alarms a thousand discussions took place over old fashioned silver three-pieces as to when "she" was really due. Schofield's Henry was much appealed to as an arbiter in these discussions, from a sense of his having a good deal to do with time in a general sort of way, and thus Schofield's came to be reminded that it was getting on toward 10 o'clock, whereas, in the excitement of festival, he had not yet struck 9. This, rushing forthwith to do, he did, and, in the elation of the moment, seven or eight besides. Miss Helen Sherwood was looking down on the mass of shifting color from a second story window of the courthouse, and she had the pleasure of seeing Schofield's emerge on the steps beneath her when the bells had done and heard the cheers led by Mr. Martin with which the crowd greeted his appearance after the performance of his feat.

She turned beamingly to Harkless. "What a family it is!" she laughed. "Just one big, jolly family! I didn't know people could be like this until I came to Plattville."

"That is the word for it," he said, resting his hand on the casement beside her. "I used to think it was desolate, but that was long ago." He leaned from the window to look down. In his dark cheek was a glow the Carlow folks had never seen there, and somehow he seemed less thin and tired than usual; indeed, he did not seem tired at all, by far the contrary, and he carried himself upright, when he was not stooping to see under the hat, though not as if he thought about it. "I believe they are the best people I know," he went on. "Perhaps it is because they have been so kind to me; but they are kind to each other, too—kind, good people."

"I know," she said, nodding. "I know. There are fat women, women who rock and rock on piazzas by the sea, and they speak of country people as the 'lower classes.' How happy this big family is in not knowing it is the lower classes!"

"We haven't read Nordau down here," said John. "Old Tom Martin's favorite work is 'The Descent of Man,' and Miss Tibbs cares most for 'Lalla Rookh' and 'Beulah.' And why not?"

"It was a girl from Southeast Cottonbridge, Mass.," said Helen, "who heard I was from Indiana and asked me if I didn't hate to live so far away from things." There was a pause while she leaned out of the window with her face aside from him. Then she remarked carelessly, "I met her at Winter Harbor."

"Do you go to Winter Harbor?" he asked.

"We have gone there every summer until this one for years. Have you friends who go there?"

"I had once. There was a classmate of mine from Rouen?"

"What was his name? Perhaps I know him." She stole a glance at him and saw that his face had fallen into sad lines.

"He's forgotten me, I dare say. I haven't seen him for seven years, and that's a long time, you know, and he's 'out in the world,' where remembering is harder. Here in Plattville we don't forget."

"Were you ever at Winter Harbor?"

"I was once. I spent a very happy day there long ago, when you must have been a little girl. Were you there in?"

"Listen!" she cried. "The procession is coming. Look at the people!"

The parade had seized a psychological moment. There was a fanfare of trumpets in the east. Lines of people rushed for the streets, and as one looked down on the big straw hats and sunbonnets and many kinds of finer head apparel tossing forward they seemed like surf sweeping up the long beaches. She was coming at last. The boys whooped in the middle of the street. Some tossed their arms to heaven, others expressed their emotion by somersaults; those most deeply moved walked on their hands. In the distance one saw over the heads of the multitude tossing banners and the moving crests of triumphal cars, where "cohorts were shining in purple and gold."

There was another flourish of music. Then all the band gave sound, and, with the blare of brass and the crash of drums, the glory of the parade burst upon Plattville. Glory in the utmost! The impetus of the march time music, the flare of royal banners, the smiling of beautiful court ladies and great silken nobles, the swaying of howdahs on camel and elephant and the awesome shaking of the earth beneath the elephant's feet and his devastating eye (every one declared he looked the alarmed Mr. Bill Snoddy, stoutest citizen of the county, full in the face as he passed him, and Mr. Snoddy felt not at all reassured when Tom Martin severely hinted that it was with the threatening glance of a rival); then the badinage of the clown, creaking by in his donkey cart; the terrific recklessness of

the spangled hero who was drawn along in a cage with two striped tigers—the delight of all this glittering pomp and pageantry needed even more than walking on your hands to express.

Last of all came the tooting calliope, followed by swarms of boys as it executed "Wait Till the Clouds Roll By, Jennie," with infinite gusto.

When it had gone Miss Sherwood's gaze relaxed—she had been looking on as eagerly as any child—and she turned to speak to Harkless and discovered that he was no longer in the room. Instead she found Minnie and Mr. Willetts, whom he had summoned from another window.

"He was called away," explained Lige. "He thought he'd be back before the parade was over and said you were enjoying it so much he didn't want to speak to you."

"Called away?"

Minnie laughed. "Oh, everybody sends for Mr. Harkless."

"It was a former name of Bowlder," added Mr. Willetts. "His son Hartley's drinking again, and there ain't any one but Harkless can do anything with him. You let him tackle a sick man to nurse or a tipsy feller to handle, and I tell you," Mr. Willetts went on, with enthusiasm, "he is at home. It beats me, and lots of people don't think college does a man any good. Why, the way he cured old Pis"—Miss Briscoe interrupted him.

"See!" she cried, pointing out of the window. "Look out there! Something's happened!"

There was a swirl in the crowd below. Men were running around a corner of the courthouse, and the women and children were harking after. They went so fast and there were so many of them that immediately that whole portion of the yard became a pushing, tugging, squirming jam of people.

"It's on the other side," said Lige.

"We can see from the hall window. Come quick before these other folks fill it up."

They followed him across the building and looked down on an agitated swarm of faces. Five men were standing on the entrance steps to the door below them, and the crowd was thickly massed beyond, leaving a little semicircle clear about the steps. Those behind struggled to get closer and leaped in the air to catch a glimpse of what was going on. Harkless stood alone on the top step, his hand resting on the shoulder of the pale and contrite and sobered Hartley. On the lowest step Jim Bardlock was standing with sheepishly hanging head and between him and Harkless the two gamblers of the walnut shells. The journalist held in his hand the implements of their profession.

"Yes; give up every cent," he said quietly. "You've taken \$86 from this boy. Hand it over."

The men began to edge down closer to the crowd, giving little, swift, desperate, searching looks from left to right and right to left and moving nervously about like weasels in a trap.

"Close up, there," said Harkless.

"Don't let them out."

"Why can't we get no square treatment here?" one of the gamblers whined. But his eyes blazed with a rage that belied the plaintive passivity of his tone. "We ain't been runnin' no skin. Why d'ye say we gotter give up our own money? You gotter prove it was a skin. We risked our money fair."

"Prove it! Come up here, Eph Watts, Friends"—the editor turned to the crowd, smiling—"friends, here's a man we ran out of town once because he knew too much about things of this sort. He's come back to us again, and he's here to stay. He'll give us an object lesson on the shell game."

"It's pretty simple," remarked Mr. Watts. "The best way is to pick up the ball with your second finger and the back part of your thumb, as you pretend to lay the shell down over it—this way." He illustrated and showed several methods of manipulation with professional sang froid, and as he made plan the vulgar swindle by which many had been duped that morning there arose an angry and threatening murmur.

"You all see," said Harkless, raising his voice, "what a simple cheat it is—an old, wornout one. Yet a lot of you lost your own money on it and then stood by, staring like idiots, and let Hartley Bowlder lose \$86, and not one of you lifted a hand. How hard did you work for what these two cheap crooks took from you? Ah," he cried, "it is because you were greedy that they robbed you so easily! You know it's true. It's when you want to get something for nothing that the 'confidence men' steal the money you sweat for and make you the laughingstock of the country. And you, Jim Bardlock, town marshal; you, who confess that you 'went in the game 60 cents' worth yourself"—His face was wrathful and stern as he raised his accusing hand and leveled it at the unhappy municipal.

The town marshal smiled uneasily and deprecatingly about him and, seeing only angry, frowning brows, hearing only words of condemnation, passed his hand unsteadily over his fat mustache, shifted from one leg to the other and back again, looked up, looked down, and then, an amiable and pleasure loving man, beholding nothing but accusation and wrath in heaven and earth and wishing nothing more than

to sink into the waters under the earth, but having no way of reaching them, and finding his troubles quite unbearable and himself unable to meet the manifold eye of man, he sought relief after the unsagacious fashion of a larger bird than he. His burly form underwent a series of convulsions not unlike sobs, and he shut his eyes tight and held them so, presenting a picture of misery unequalled in the memory of



"You, you, a man elected to"—

any spectator. The editor's outstretched hand began to shake. "You," he tried to continue; "you, a man elected to"—

There came from the crowd the sound of a sad, high keyed voice drawing, "That's a nice vest Jim's got on, but it ain't hardly the feathers fitten for an estrich, is it?"

Harkless broke into a ringing laugh and turned to the shell men. "Give up the boy's money. Hurry."

"Step down here and git it," said the one who had spoken.

There was a turbulent motion in the crowd, and a cry arose: "Run 'em out! Ride 'em on a rail! Tar and feathers! Run 'em out o' town!"

"I wouldn't dillydally long if I were you," said Harkless. A roll of bills was sullenly placed in his hand, which he counted and turned over to the elder Bowlder. One of the shell men clutched the editor's sleeve with his dirty hand. "We hain't done w' youse," he said hoarsely. "Don't belief it, not for a minute, see?"

The town marshal opened his eyes briskly and, placing a hand on each of the gamblers, said, "I do hereby arrest your said persons and declare you my prisoners."

The cry arose again louder: "Run 'em out! String 'em up! Hang 'em! Hang them!" And a forward rush was made.

"This way, Jim. Quick!" cried Harkless, bending down and jerking one of the gamblers half way up the steps. "Get through the hall to the other side and then run 'em to the lockup. No one will stop you that way. Watts and I will hold this door."

Bardlock hustled his prisoners through the doorway, and the crowd pushed up the steps, while Harkless struggled to keep the vestibule clear until Watts got the double doors closed. "Stand back, there!" he shouted. "It's all over. Don't be foolish. The law is good enough for us. Stand back, will you?" He was shoving vigorously with open hand and elbow, when a compact little group of men suddenly dashed up the steps together, and a heavy stick swung out over their heads. A straw hat with a gay ribbon sailed through the air. The editor's long arms went out swiftly from his body in several directions, the hands not open, but clinched and hard. The next instant he and Mr. Watts stood alone on the steps, and a man with a bleeding, blaspheming mouth dropped his stick and tried to lose himself in the crowd. Mr. Watts was returning something he had not used to his hip pocket.

"Prophets of Israel!" exclaimed Wilham Todd ruefully. "It wasn't Eph Watts' pistol. Did you see Mr. Harkless? I was up on them steps when he begun. I don't believe he needs as much takin' care of as we think."

"Wasn't it one of them Crossroads devils that knocked his hat off?" asked Judd Bennett. "I thought I see Bob Skillet run up with a club."

Harkless threw open the doors behind him. The hall was empty. "You may come in now," he said. "This isn't my courthouse."

CHAPTER VI.

THEY walked slowly back along the pike toward the brick house. He was stooping very much as they walked. He wanted to be told that he could look at her for a thousand years. The small face was rarely and exquisitely modeled, but perhaps just now the salient characteristic of her beauty (for the salient characteristic seemed to be a different thing at different times) was the coloring, a delicate glow under the white skin, a glow that bewitched him in its seeming to reflect the rich benediction of the noonday sun that blazed overhead.

Once he had thought Briscoe homestead it

(Continued on Page Seven.)