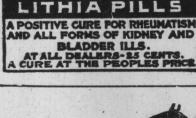
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The Gentleman From Indiana

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There was a rumble of thunder far out on the western prairie. A cold breath stole through the hot stillness, and an arm of vapor reached out between the moon and the quiet earth. Darkness fell. The man and girl kept silence between them. They might have been two sad guardians of the black little stream that plashed unseen at their feet. Now and then a reflection of faraway lightning faintly limned them with a green light. Thunder rolled nearer, ominously. The gods were driving their charlots over the bridge. The chill breath passed, leaving the air again to its hot inertia.

"I did not want to go," she said at last, with tears just below the surface of her voice. "I wanted to stay here, but he-they wouldn't-I can't"-"Wanted to stay here?" he said hus-

kily, not turning. . "Here? In Indiana?" "In Rouen, you mean?"

"In Plattville."

"In Plattville!" He turned now, as-"Yes. | Wouldn't you have taken me on the Herald?" She rose and came toward him. "I could have supported myself here if you would, and I've studied how newspapers are made. I know I could have earned a wage. I could have helped you make it a daily." He searched in vain for a trace of rail-

taken literally. don't know what you mean.' "I mean that I want to stay here;



conscience tells me I should; but can't, and it makes me very unhappy. That was why I acted so badly." "Your conscience!" he cried. "Oh, I know what a jumble and puz

tle it must seem to you!" "I only know one thing-that you are going away tomorrow morning and that I shall never see you again."

The darkness had grown intense.

They could not see each other, but a wan glimmer gave him a fleeting, misty view of her. She stood half turned from him, her hand to her cheek in the uncertain fashion of his great moment in the afternoon. Her eyes, he saw in the flying picture that he caught, were troubled, and her hand trembled. She had been irresistible in her gayety, but now that a mysterious distress assailed her, of the reason for which he had no guess, she was so adorably pathetic and seemed such a rich and lovely and sad and happy thing to have come into his life only to go out of it, and he was so full of the prophetic sense of loss of her, it seemed so much like losing everything, that he found too, much to say to be able to

say anything. He tried to speak and choked a little.

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words out of her mouth and drove ber By BOOTH TARKINGTON back, cowering, to the shelter of the

> think you ought not to go?" he whispered finally with a great effort. "No; not now. But I know you would think I am right in wanting to stay. I know you would if you knew about it; but I can't, I can't. I must go in the morning."

head. Neither of them noticed the

weather or cared for it. They stood

with the renewed blackness hanging

"Can-can you-tell me why you

like a drapery between them.

"I should always think you right," he answered in an unsteady tone, "always." He went over to the bench, fumbled about for his hat and picked

"Come," he said gently, "I am going She stood quite motionless for a full minute or longer; then, without a word, she moved toward the house. He went and his fingers touched her sleeve. Together and silently they found the garden path and followed its dim length. In the orchard he touched her sleeve again and led the way.

As they came out behind the house she detained him. Stopping short; she shook his hand from her arm. She spoke in a breath, as if it were all one

"Will you tell me why you go? It is not late. Why do you wish to leave me, when I shall not see you again?" lery in her voice. There was none. "The Lord be good to me!" he broke She seemed to intend her words to be out, all his long pent passion of dreams rushing to his lips as the barrier fell. away without saying it. I want to be am. It is because I don't want another added pain when you've gone. It is again, to have it haunt me in the loneuseless. I shall hear it always, just as I shall always see your face, just as I have heard your voice and seen your face these seven years, ever since I first saw you, a child, at Winter Harbor. I forgot for awhile. I thought it was a girl I had made up out of my own heart, but it was you all the time. The impression I thought nothing of then; just the merest touch on my heart, light as it was, grew and grew deeper till it was there forever. You've known me twenty-four hours, and I understand what you think of me for speaking to you like this. If I had known you for years and had waited and had the right to speak and keep your respect, what have I to offer you? I couldn't even take care of you if you went mad as I and listened. I've no excuse for this raving- Yes, I have." He saw her in another second of

lightning, a sudden, bright one. Her back was turned to him, and she had taken a few startled steps from him. "Ah," he cried, "you are glad enough now to see me go! I knew it. I want-

ed to spare myself that. I tried not to be a hysterical fool in your eyes." He turned aside, and his head fell on his breast. "God help me!" he said. "What will this place be to me new?" The breeze had risen. It gathered force. It was a chill wind, and there

rose a wailing on the prairie. Drops of rain began to fall. "You will not think a question im plied in this," he said, more composed-

ly, but with an unhappy laugh at himself. "I believe you will not think me capable of asking you if you care"-"No," she answered, "I-I do not love "Ah, was it a question, after all? Iyou read me better than I do, perhaps.

But, if I asked, I knew the answer." She made as if to speak again, but words refused her. After a moment, "Goodby," he said

very steadily. "I thank you for the charity that has given me this little time-with you. It will always beprecious to me. I shall always be your servant." His steadiness did not carry him to the end of his sentence. "Good-

She started toward him and stopped. He did not see her. She answered nothing, but stretched out her hand to him and then let it fall quickly.

"Goodby," he said again. "I shall go out the orchard gate. Please tell them good night for me. Won't you speak to me? Goodby!"

He stood waiting, while the rising wind blew their garments about them. She leaned against the wall of the house. "Won't you say goodby and tell me you can forget my"-She did not speak.

"No!" he cried wildly. "Since you don't forget it! I have spoiled what might have been a pleasant memory for you, and I know it. You are already troubled, and I have added, and you won't forget it, nor shall I-nor shall I. Don't say goodby! I can say it for both of us. God bless you, and goodby, goodby, goodby!" He crushed his hat down over his

eyes and ran toward the orchard gate. For a moment lightning flashed repeatedly. She saw him go out the gate and disappear into sudden darkness. He ran through the field and came out on the road. Heaven and earth were revealed again for a dazzling white

clouds contorted like an illimitable field of inverted haystacks, and beneath them enormous volumes of bluish vapor were tumbling in the west, advancing eastward with sinister swiftness. She ran to a little knoll at the corner of the house and saw him set his face to the storm. She cried ales to him with all her strength and would have followed, but the wind took the

Out on the road the lashing dust came stinging him like a thousand nettles. It smothered him and beat him so that he covered his face with his sleeve and fought into the storm shoulder foremost, dimly glad of its uproar, yet almost unconscious of it, keeping westward on his way to nowhere. West or east, north or south, it was all one to him. The few heavy drops that fell boiling into the dust ceased to come; the rain withheld while the wind kings rode on earth. On he went in spite of them. On and on, running blindly when he could run at all. At least the wind kings were company. He had been so long alone. There was no one who belonged to him or to whom he belonged. For a day his dreams had found in a girl's eyes the precious thing that is called home. Oh, the wild fancy! He laughed aloud.

There was a startling answer-a lance of fire hurled from the sky, riving the fields before his eyes, while crash on crash numbed his ears. With that ed about him. He was two miles from to her, with hands extended to find her, town. The nearest house was the Briscoes', far down the road. He knew the rain would come now. There was a big oak near him at the roadside, and he stepped under its sheltering branches and leaned against the great trunk, wiping the perspiration and dust from his face. A moment of stunned quiet had succeeded the peal of thunder. It was followed by several moments of incessant lightning that played along the road and the fields. From that intolerable brightness he turned his head and saw, standing against the fence, five feet away, a man, leaning over the

top-rail and looking at him. The same flash swept brilliantly bebear to let you go? I hoped to get against the back steps of the brick house. It revealed a picture like a alone. I want to be with myself and marine of big waves, the tossing tops try to realize things. I didn't want to of the orchard trees, for in that second make a babbling idiot of myself, but I the full fury of the storm was loosed. wind and rain and hail. It drove her second of your sweetness to leave an against the kitchen door with cruel force. The latch lifted, the door blew because I don't want to hear your voice open violently, and she struggled to close it in vain. The house seemed to liness you will leave. But it's useless, rock. A candle flickered toward her from the inner doorway and was blown

"Helen! Helen!" came Minnie's voice anxiously. "Is that you? We were coming to look for you. Did you get

Mr. Willetts threw his weight against the door and managed to close it. Then Minnie found her friend's hand and led her through the dark-hall to the parlor, where the judge sat placidly reading by a student lamp.

Lige chuckled as they left the kitchen. "I guess you didn't try too hard to shut that door, Harkless," he said, and then when they came into the lighted room, "Why, where is Harkless?" he asked. "Didn't he come with us from the kitchen?" "No," answered Helen faintly. "He's

gone." She sank upon the sofa and put her hand over her eyes as if to shade them from too sudden light. "Gone!" The judge dropped his book and sat staring across the table at the

girl. "Gone! When?" "Ten minutes-five-half an hour-I don't know. Before the storm com-"Oh!" The old gentleman appeared

to be reassured. "Probably he had work to do and wanted to get in before the rain." But Lige Willetts was turning pale. "Which way did he go? He didn't father of twenty-seven children, who come around the house. We were out

there till the storm broke." "He went by the orchard gate. When he got to the road he turned that way.' She pointed to the west. "He must have been crazy!" exclaim-

ed the judge. "What possessed the fel-

"I couldn't stop him. I didn't know how." She looked at her three companions, slowly and with growing terror, from one face to another. Min nie's eyes were wide, and she had unconsciously grasped Lige's arm. 'The young man was staring straight before him. The judge got up and walked nervously back and forth. Helen rose to her feet and went toward the old man, her hands pressed to her bosom. "Ah," she cried out, "I had forgotten that! You don't think they-you don't

"I know what I think," Lige broke in. "I think I'd ought to be hanged for letting him out of my sight. Maybe it's all right. Maybe he turned and started right back for town-and got there. But I had no business to leave him, and if I can I'll catch up with him yet." He went to the front door and,

ning it, let in a tornado of wind and flood of water that beat him back. Sheets of rain blew in horizontally in spite of the porch beyond. Briscoe followed him. "Don't be

fool, Lige," he said. "You hardly expect to go out in that." Lige shook his head. It needed them both to get the door closed. The young man leaned his back against it and passed his sleeve across his wet brow. "I hadn't ought to have left him."

"Don't scare the girls," whispered the other; then in a louder tone: "All I'm afraid of is that he'll get blown to pieces or catch his death of cold. That's all there is to worry about. They wouldn't try it again so soon after last night. I'm not bothering about that; not at all. That needn't worry any-From borizon to horizon rolles But this morning"-

"Pshaw! He's likely nome and and by this time. All foolishness. Don't

The two men re-entered the room and found Helen clinging to Minnie's hand on the sofa. She looked up at them quickly.

"Do you think-do you-what do Her voice shook so that she could not

The judge pinched her cheek and patted it. "I think he's home and dry, but I think he got wet first. That's what I think. Never you fear. He's a good hand at taking care of himself. Sit down, Lige. You can't go for awhile." Nor could he. It was a long, long while before he could venture out. The storm raged and roared without abatement. It was Carlow's worst since '51, the old gentleman said. They heard the great limbs crack and break outside, while the thunder pealed and boomed, and the wind ripped at the eaves till it seemed as if the roof must go. Meanwhile the judge, after some apology, lit his pipe and told long stories of the storms of early days and of odd freaks of the wind. He talked on calmly, the picture of repose, and blew rings above his head, but Helen saw that one of his big slippers beat an unceasing little tattoo on the carpet. She sat with fixed eyes, in silence, holding Minnie's hand tightly, and her face was colorless, growing whiter as the slow hours

Every moment Mr. Willetts became more restless. He assured the ladies he had no anxiety regarding Mr. Harkless. It was only his own dereliction of duty that he regretted. The boys

would have the laugh on him, he said But he visibly chafed more and more under the judge's stories and constantly rose to peer out of the window into the wrack and turmoil, and once or twice he struck his hands together with muttered ejaculations. At last there was a lull in the fury without, and as soon as it was perceptible he announced his intention of making his way into town. He "had ought to have went before." he declared apprehensively. and then, with immediate amendment. of course he would find the editor at wasn't the slightest doubt of that, he agreed with the judge, but he better see about it. He would return early in the morning and bid Miss Sherwood goodby. Hoped she'd come back some day; hoped it wasn't her last visit to Plattville. They gave him an umbrella, and he plunged into the night, and as they stood for a moment at the door, the old man calling after him cheery good nights and laughing messages to Harkless, they could see him fight with his umbrella when he got out into the

Helen's room was over the porch, the windows facing north, looking out upon the pike and across the fields. "Please don't light the lamp, Minnie," she said when they had gone upstairs. "I don't need it." Miss Briscoe was flitting about the room hunting for matches. In the darkness she came to her friend and laid a kind, large hand on Helen's eyes, and the hand became wet. She drew Helen's head down on her shoulder and sat beside her on the

"Sweetheart, you mustn't fret," she soothed in motherly fashion. "Don't you worry, dear. He's all right. It isn't your fault, dear. They wouldn't come on a night like this."

(To be continued.)

Quite a Family Man. On a flat stone in Conway church Wales, is the following inscription: "Here lyeth the body of Nicholas Hookes of Conway, gent., who was the forty-first child of his father, William Hookes, Esq., by Alice, his wife, and died the 20th day of March, 1637."

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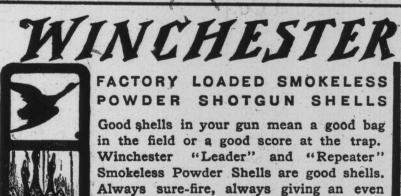
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