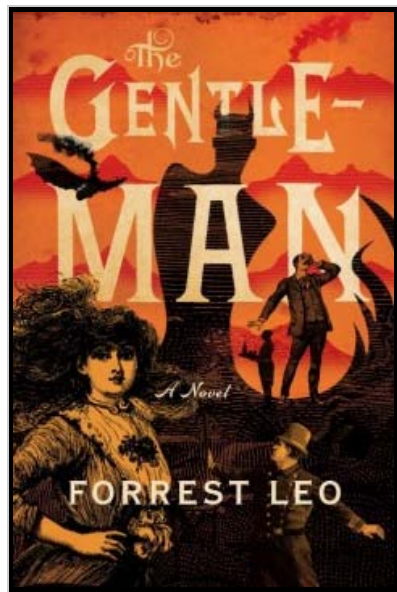




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The Gentleman

by Forrest Leo

Price: \$26.00(Hardcover)

Published: August 16, 2016

☆☆☆☆☆

Rating: 0.0/5 (0 votes cast)

From the Publisher: A funny, fantastically entertaining debut novel, in the spirit of Wodehouse and Monty Python, about a famous poet who inadvertently sells his wife to the devil--then recruits a band of adventurers to rescue her. When Lionel Savage, a popular poet in Victorian London, learns from his butler that they're broke, he marries the beautiful Vivien Lancaster for her money, only to find that his muse has abandoned him. Distracted and contemplating suicide, Savage accidentally conjures the Devil -- the polite "Gentleman" of the title -- who appears at one of the society parties Savage abhors. The two hit it off: the Devil talks about his home, where he employs Dante as a gardener; Savage lends him a volume of Tennyson. But when the party's over and Vivien has disappeared, the poet concludes in horror that he must have inadvertently sold his wife to the dark...

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About The Author

Forrest Leo

Forrest Leo was born in 1990 on a homestead in remote Alaska, where he grew up without running water and took a dogsled to school. He holds a BFA in drama from New York University, and has worked as a carpenter, and a photographer, and in a cubicle.

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What We Say

Forrest Leo should be ashamed of himself. He has written a thoroughly Unimportant Novel. It tackles no great subjects, it wakes the conscience to no societal ills, and I doubt very much whether Leo even considered the merits of theme or motif. In short, it is...amusing. "The Gentleman" is frivolous frippery with its sole purpose being that of humor. Comedy is all well and good for the British: their Empire has crumpled and they have nothing to do but sob into their tea or compose light comic novels of the PG (but not P.G.) Wodehouse sort. Some turn their talent, such as it is, to television and sketch comedy. (Monty Python and that ilk spring to mind.) But Forrest Leo is American and humor is not welcome in the robust

American novel. Yes, our greatest writer may be Mark Twain and he is -- it must be admitted -- very funny. But we pass over that in silence and focus instead on his social satire and admirable atheistic leanings. True, Leo was born and raised in Alaska, which perhaps is closer to England than much of America, assuming one doesn't count Canada. (And who would?) In any case, geography is neither here nor there and who can keep track of British territorial holdings, however slim and failing they may be. Suffice to say that Alaska is not England. So what possible excuse could there be for this...Wodehousian romp? (That is NOT a compliment.) It features a poet in vaguely Victorian times who has run out of money and marries to get more of it. His wife proves a bore and he inadvertently sells her to the Devil. (It happens.) Shamed into action, our hero teams with said wife's adventurer brother, his indomitable little sister Lizzie, an inventor he meets in a bookshop that never closes and an unflappable butler of the sort always populating comic novels but never truly around in real life when one needs them. (Think "Jeeves & Wooster" if Wooster wrote poetry and Jeeves were, well, Jeeves.) I suppose I must confess to frequent bouts of laughter, whether it be from our hero's absurd self-regard, the footnotes of his Johnson, the insult-a-thon that takes place whenever he meets his poetical arch-rival or attempts to complete a poem by pretending "devil" can be crunched into the one syllable word "Dev'l." (It doesn't work but I am chastened to admit I giggled every single time he tried to say "Dev'l" and other characters were obliged to say "what?" or "come again?" or "I've no idea what you're saying.") The novel climaxes with a sword fight over poetry, specifically whether free verse is preferable to the demands of meter. (The answer is obvious.) I can't decide whether to call all this nonsense pastiche or parody or simply a new work in the vein of Wodehouse. I'll settle for whichever description might prevent Leo from the dangerous folly of ever writing a comic novel again. Americans should know better. -- Michael Giltz

What Others Say

“Leo has a whimsical gift...His characters are rich with personality and eccentricity...Leo brings [them] to life with charm, wit, and pomp, and he builds a fully realized — if not a little wacky — Victorian London teeming with adventure and mystery...And yet, so much of the novel’s great appeal comes from the hilariously realistic way in which it depicts the quirkiness of writers, the idiosyncratic relationships between them, and the painstaking work of their editors.”—*Electric Literature*

“This novel weaves together a brilliant sense of voice, a classic comedic touch that’s as potent as it is gentle, and a group of characters that could just as easily exist in a ‘Monty Python’s Flying Circus’ sketch as they could in a P.G. Wodehouse novel. With his first book, Leo delivers us a story that’s entertaining on about a dozen different levels, and he does it with a sense of joy that imbues his often self-serious narrator with a quality that makes every page lovable...Endlessly brisk, charming, and most importantly, clever...[The] characters...seem both wholly original yet clearly carved out of the page of a thumping good potboiler. It’s a marriage of old and new that’s never tiring,...

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