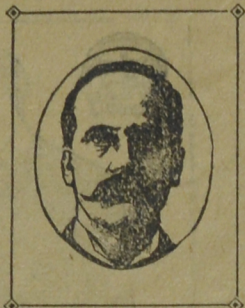


The REFORMER

By CHARLES M. SHELDON,
Author of "In His Steps," "Robert Hardy's Seven Days," Etc.

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CO. TINT

He opened the door and stepped out. The roar of the city smote his senses with new meaning as he went down the steps and entered the stream of the city's life. He would go at once to Luella Marsh. Whatever it was to be for him, suspense was not bearable. Hitherto he had emphasized his own love for her. Henceforth he must know to what extent she loved him, for humanity had now become a part of the creed of his life, and the woman who was to share all with him must love humanity as well as himself. The people—he was one of them now. Would she love him as such, or would she cling to the traditional selfishness of her position?

Thus John Gordon, as he turned his back on his father's house, faced his future as the human current bore him on, its destiny irrevocably woven into his own.

CHAPTER II.



"Studying life, eh?" said David Barton.

ARE you quite sure you understand the situation, Luella?" John Gordon asked the question gravely, but his look did not betray any anxiety yet. He had been talking to Luella Marsh for several minutes. His face also was grave, almost solemnly so, but there was a growing expression of uneasiness upon it as she turned her head toward her lover.

"I think so—yes," she said slowly. "In other words, you mean no," said John Gordon, smiling slowly.

Luella Marsh returned the smile and then became instantly grave again.

"I would like to ask you a few more questions. May I?"

"Of course."

"Then I don't know that I am quite clear in my mind as to your exact reasons for leaving your own home. Will you try to make me understand that?"

"Luella"—He paused, and for the first time a fear grew upon him that he was going to fail to make her understand the real crisis in his life.

Was this the attitude of the woman who could prove to be the companion he would need? Would she hesitate and demand all these proofs and reasons, all these explanations? And yet he felt the need of her. She had thus far satisfied him, and as he faced her now there was only one prayer in his heart, and that was that she would finally cast in her lot with his and say:

"Where thou goest I will go. Thy people shall be my people and thy God my God."

He began his explanation while Luella leaned her chin on her hand and watched him with deepening seriousness.

"I am thirty years old. From the time of my birth I have been used to every luxury. I have enjoyed all the elegant comforts of a rich, exclusive, proud family. My father's ambition, as you know, has always been the ambition of a man who has lived a life as remote from the common people as if he had been born in some other world. I have grown up in this atmosphere. I have known, as little of

the people and their real life as my father. Up to the time of my religious experience I cared as little for the people as I knew about them. Since that experience my whole object in living has changed. I find myself longing to know the people as much as I already love them. It is not enough that I love them at a distance. I must know from close personal experience their daily life. As near as possible I must partake of their sorrows, their privations, their misery. Do not answer me yet." John Gordon eagerly restrained a movement on Luella's part to interrupt with a word. "Why should I not do this, I who have all my life tasted the luxury of soft and easy physical living? There is only one thing for me to do if I accomplish my

life's ambition now, and that is to leave the surroundings that are so completely opposed to all the life of the people I have come to love in order that I may know, if possible, as well as love, with intelligent power to help."

"And you ask me to leave my home as you leave yours?"

She did not look at him while asking the question, but in the silence that followed before he replied she turned her face full toward him. His answer came very calmly, but his voice in spite of him trembled a little.

"The woman who becomes my wife will make her home with me. We shall share alike whatever the future contains."

It was perhaps at this moment that Luella Marsh had her first glimpse into John Gordon's real character. She had never given him credit for much imagination or poetic feeling. In reality he had a great deal of both. But she did not change her position of serious thoughtfulness. She only turned her head a little as she said:

"Where do you intend to make your home? Will you tell me in detail?"

"I have not fully decided; probably in Hope House."

"And you expect me to live with you there?"

"If you marry me, yes." John Gordon spoke with effort. His fear had grown with every word she uttered, with every new question she put to him.

"I will never"—she began and rose to her feet. Gordon rose instantly.

"Wait a moment!" She sat down and motioned him to be seated. "Wait! I want to think awhile."

She put her hands over her face, and John Gordon watched and waited. His heart was hungry for her love, but his soul trembled for what he thought was to be her decision. As the minutes went by and she still made no motion his conviction deepened that his knowledge of her character and motives was superficial. All that he really knew was to some degree the strength of her personality. He knew she could not be moved by pleading. If she would not go with him out of a love that pleaded its own cause, John Gordon knew that no other motive would prevail.

When she finally lifted her head, she put her hands behind her and looked full and frank into his face. But what she said surprised him at first until he saw its bearing on her final answer.

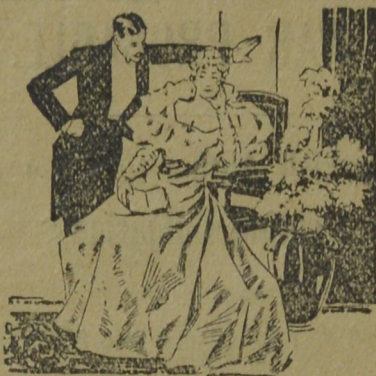
"You used the word 'people' a good many times in what you said about your reasons for leaving your father's house. Tell me what you mean by it."

"By the word?" He was doubtful as to her meaning.

"Yes, just what do you mean by saying you are moved by a love for the 'people'?"

"I mean the masses, the multitudes, the people, the humanity that works with its hands for a living, the humanity that toils at the furnace and the loom and the machine, the humanity that lives on days' wages and lives to produce the things that give persons like you and me pleasure, the things we say we must have for our luxurious tastes, Luella!" John Gordon spoke for the first time with the same passion he had used in the interview with his father, a passion that sounded the new note of his redeemed manhood.

"What have we known or cared for humanity? Our days have been wasted in selfish and foolish gratification of the senses, while these, our brothers and sisters, have been not only uncared for by us, but actually unknown. Of what value our boasted culture, our elegant houses, our fine spun clothing, our fastidious habits, if in the refinement of a civilization that is veneered



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seamstress we play our little plays like children and never wake to the power of usefulness as grownup men and women who have giants' work to do for the weak and less fortunate?"

Luella Marsh listened in genuine surprise. This was another new phase of her lover's character. But there were things said by him that angered her, although while John Gordon was talking she was saying to herself, "I did not know he had any gifts as a speaker that would bear development."

(To be Continued)



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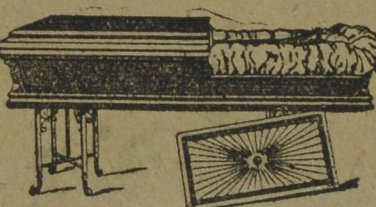
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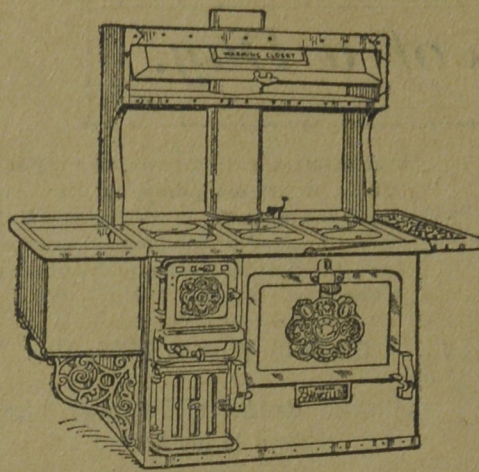
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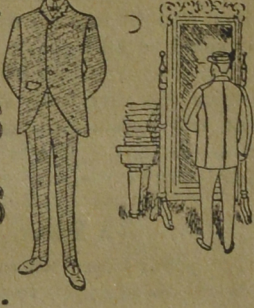
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