

The Reformer

By CHARLES M. SHELDON.
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[CONTINUED.]

The cry was wrong from him by a sharp and sudden pain that took account of the fact of blood kinship. It was the cry of human fellowship, the exclamation of a personality that had always placed great stress on the value of companionship. But there was no cry from the man who sat coldly looking at him. Rufus Gordon was a father, but he was also that personification of the net product of our un-Christian methods—he was crystallized selfishness—none the less selfish because civilized, all the more selfish because it was more effective in civilized form. Ignorant self is not so destructive as educated self.

"Is there anything more?" Rufus Gordon asked the question as a business proposition to close an interview that was taking valuable time needed for more important transactions.

"Nothing more except that I hope you will—you will not bear any hard feelings toward me. Oh, father!" John Gordon suddenly exclaimed, taking a step toward the impassive figure. "You said you loved me. Cannot you believe

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in me and the life I have chosen?"

For a moment over the hard face there swept a tremor. It was gone in a moment and Rufus Gordon answered slowly:

"You have chosen. When you change your mind, you may come and see me about it."

"I shall never change my mind."

"That is all, then?"

"Yes, except that my love for you and Mary is still the same. Some time, when you have felt what I have, you will believe as I do."

Rufus Gordon made no answer, and John Gordon slowly turned to leave the room.

"I will arrange to have my things taken over to Barton's. I am going to stay with him until I arrange for my permanent quarters."

He left the room and went upstairs, where he busied himself with packing the few possessions he had brought home with him from abroad. During it all his highly imaginative and even poetical nature took account of the prosaic and matter of fact way in which he was taking leave of the house where he was born and of the home in which he had been reared. There had been no melodramatic disinheritance of him by his father, although he knew him well enough to know that the life he had chosen, directly contrary to his father's lifelong wishes, practically swept him outside the financial thought, so far as Rufus Gordon was concerned. The impossibility of staying in a home, with all its acts of disobedience to the greatest rule of life, was what made the removal of John Gordon absolutely imperative. That this removal was taking place without the outward spoken words of tragedy made the real action no less real or painful.

When he finally came downstairs, he found no one in the house. At first he felt strangely oppressed. Afterward he felt relieved. He had chosen his life, as he had said, and his choice had seriously begun. As he laid his hand on the door to open it the consciousness of his uncertainty regarding Luella Marsh swept out of his thought even the sense that he was actually bidding goodbye to the home he had known for thirty years. Would this woman he loved as never in all his life before—would she choose the life he had chosen? She was rich, or her father was. She was gifted, an aristocrat by birth and training, a woman of strong and original personality, with many impulses not yet known even to John Gordon. He was almost startled at the sudden realization that he was in ignorance concerning her actual character so far as the present crisis was con-



The man on the stage who does the trick of escaping from firmly tied ropes, submits to the bonds with a smile. He knows he can get out of the ropes that are being knotted. Put the same man in the woods and let Indian captors bind him to a tree for torture and he would struggle to the last against the bonds.

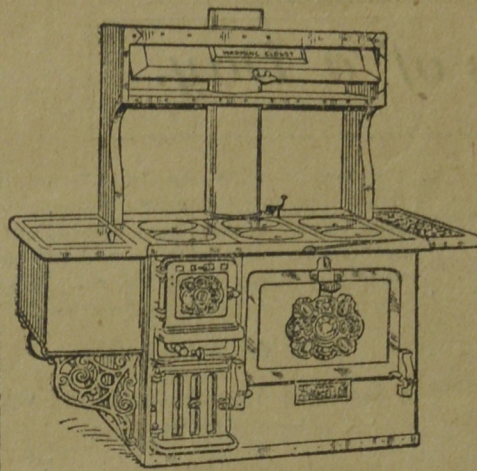
When the stomach is diseased there are bonds being woven every hour about the organs dependent on the stomach—heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, etc. The folly of mankind is to passively submit to the fastening of these bonds with no effort to escape until the pain they cause arouses fear.

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cerned. Yet he knew that according to her answer now would depend the shaping of his own future. They had become engaged while he was in his last year at the university. Then he had gone abroad, and their correspondence had evidently deepened their respect and affection. He had written her of his religious experience—not in detail, but her answers had apparently satisfied him. His choices, ambitions, longing for service, had all followed so tumultuously on the event of his religious crisis that he had not ventured to say to her in letters what he had begun to experience as a profound conviction. Every moment now, therefore, he felt with growing astonishment, confronted him with an unknown problem, although the woman in all the world to him was at the heart of all that was great and possible.



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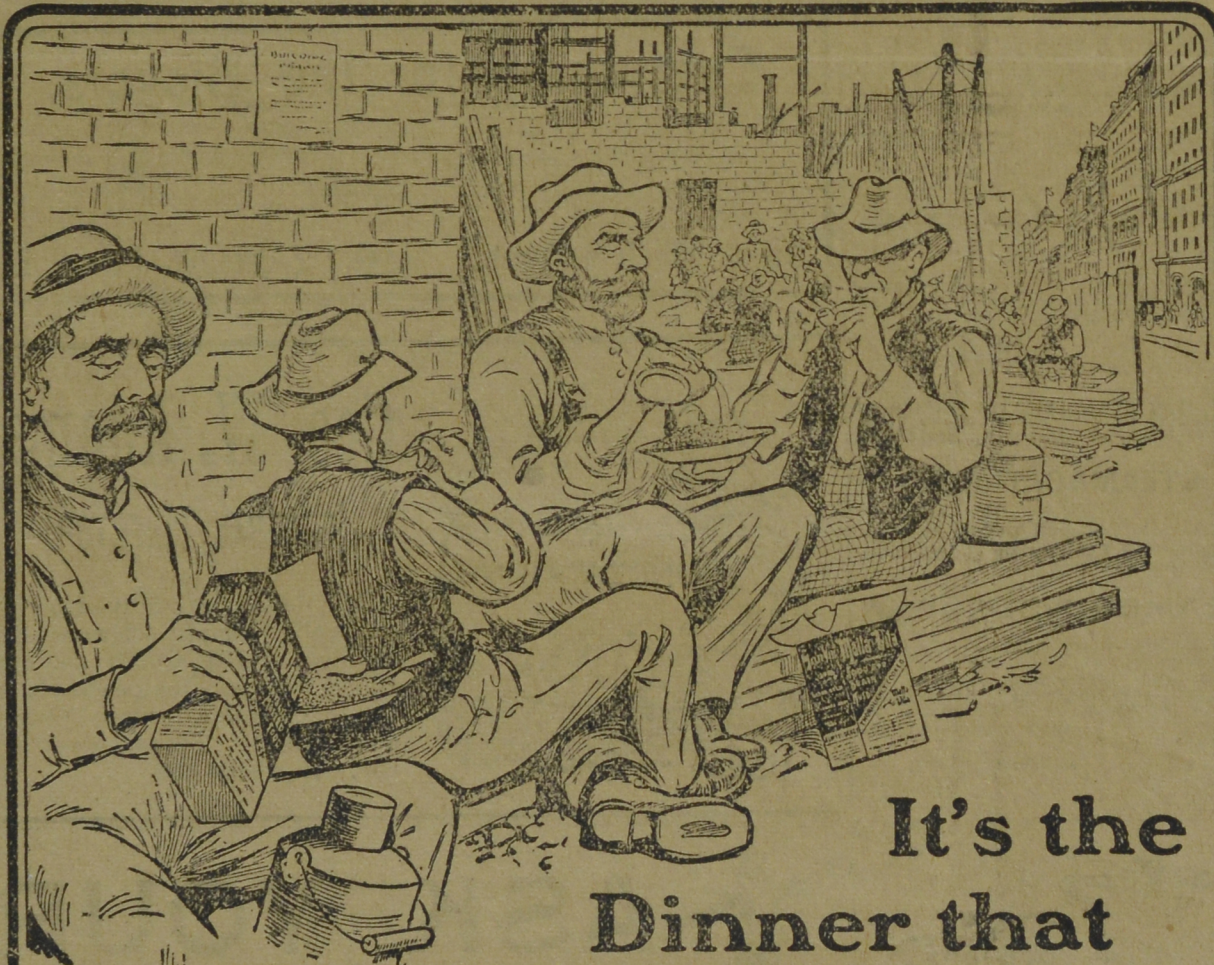
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