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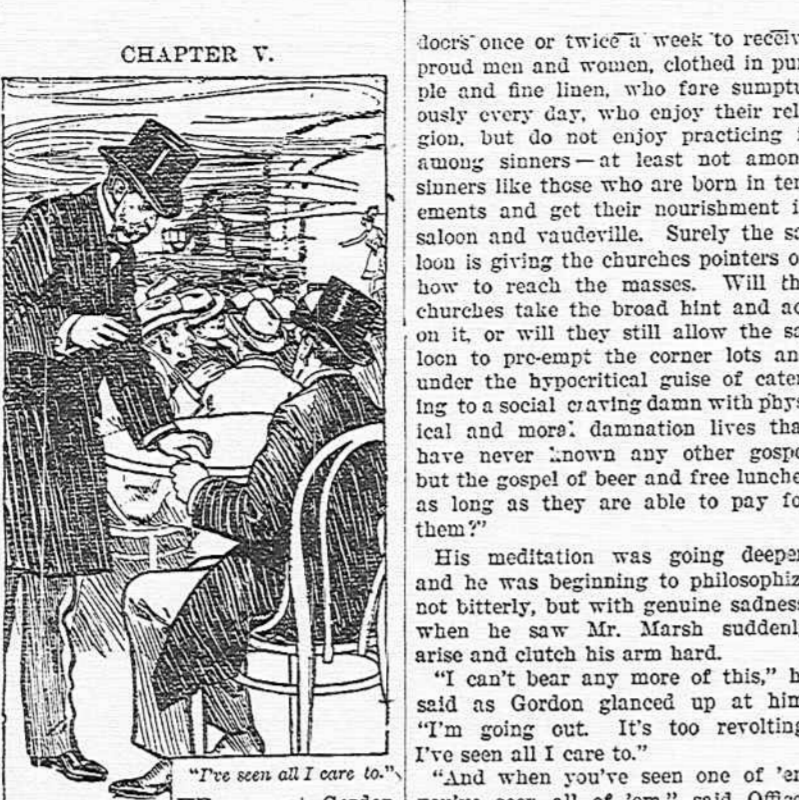
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The REFORMER
By CHARLES M. SHELDON.
Author of "His Steps," "Robert Hardy's Seven Days," Etc.
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CHAPTER V.
"I've seen all I care to," he said as he stepped out of the door. He had never entered one of the vaudeville halls but once before and had then come in to hunt for one of the young men who had been attending the night classes at Hope House. His knowledge of the character of the entertainment was gained from Ford, the university resident.

The officer shrugged his shoulders. "They'd make it mighty uncomfortable for you before you got out or got in again. The saloon may be a social nuisance to the poor devil in the double deckers, but it don't furnish social amusements without getting mighty well paid for it. It's free, but it's expensive," said Officer Roberts. The bartender came back with the cigars and a tray loaded with beer and whisky. The liquor was distributed around on little tables at which the boys and men in the audience were mostly seated. As the curtain went up to the music of the orchestra there were about 150 in the room and a stream of newcomers noisily entering. Before the first song was finished, the hall was filled to suffocation.

As the entertainment, if it could be called such, went on, John Gordon's soul was stirred deep with a red blooded indignation. After the first two or three vulgar songs, which were followed by some suggestive dances, he sat there practically hearing and seeing nothing on the stage. The audience had become the absorbing thing for him. The people! There they were! His choice! To serve and to love! But what is worth while?

The majority of the company was composed of young men between eighteen and twenty-five years of age. They were as a type pale, listless and astonishingly dull of expression. John Gordon was irresistibly drawn to imagine the exact appearance of the rooms that these young men probably called home. He then began to raise a host of questions concerning their parents, their occupations, their wages, the amount they probably spent on the saloon and the places they went to on Sunday. The absolute absence of any thing interesting or elevating in their lives impressed him with tremendous reality. All the churches in the city were on the fine streets miles away. There was not a religious institution, with the possible exception of Hope House, that had any influence in the lives of these apathetic, coarsened, dissipated young men. The vaudeville and the saloon touched their lives, but the church never did. Yet it was the sinner that Jesus came to save. Was the church realizing her responsibility to neglect this awful swarm of youth that bred like disease and death in the impure atmosphere of these polluted walls? God have mercy on them! Are they more stoned than sinning? Can a boy or girl grow up pure in temptations like these we have here in this great smitten city? And the one social institution that comes forward to minister to the social instincts is the saloon! It says to the tired workman who has no place worthy to be called a home, "Come, enjoy a social glass in a handsome, well lighted, cheerful room!" It says to the men whose appetite is never satisfied with ill prepared food, "Come, enjoy a free lunch! Only of course you will want beer or whisky to wash it down." And without saying this to the man, only to itself, the saloon, with devilish foresight, reckons on getting back by means of the free lunch 100 per cent in the actual sale of drinks. Truly Officer Roberts is right when he says, "It's free, but it's expensive."

It says to the young man who has no healthy outlet for physical life because he is born without playgrounds and without home pleasures: "Come! In the vaudeville I will amuse you. The songs and the dances will be suggestive, and the young women who furnish the amusement are fallen, but vice is a necessity to civilization, and we stand ready to furnish what the church and other religious organizations will never give you."

"Surely," John Gordon meditated, "the saloon in its day and generation is wiser than the children of light. The devil must dance in glee over the sight of the tenement and slum districts in the city as he sees his finest agents occupying the field of social panders to a human necessity, while the solemn, empty stone edifices called churches stand stately and still upon the grand boulevards and open their doors once or twice a week to receive proud men and women, clothed in purple and fine linen, who enjoy their religion, but do not enjoy practicing it among sinners—at least not among sinners like those who are born in tenements and get their nourishment in saloon and vaudeville. Surely the saloon is giving the churches pointers on how to reach the masses. Will the churches take the broad hint and act upon it, or will they still allow the saloon to pre-empt the corner lots and under the hypocritical guise of catering to a social craving damn with physical and moral damnation lives that have never known any other gospel but the gospel of beer and free lunches as long as they are able to pay for them?"

His meditation was going deeper, and he was beginning to philosophize not bitterly, but with genuine sadness, when he saw Mr. Marsh suddenly arise and clutch his arm hard. "I can't bear any more of this," he said as Gordon glanced up at him. "I'm going out. It's too revolting. I've seen all I care to."

HE moment Gordon and Mr. Marsh had taken their seats in the hall a man with a white apron came up and standing directly in front of them, said, "What'll you have?" "Cigars for three," said the officer. And as the man slowly moved away after giving the three visitors a sharp look the officer said in answer to the question from Mr. Marsh: "Oh, the show's free. So's the lunch. But everybody is expected to take something. The saloons ain't doing this for their health nor for the love of the people, not if they know it."

full possession of all the facts of Mr. Marsh's ownership of the property and his exact attitude in every particular toward the scenes he had witnessed. The talk had not proceeded ten minutes before she said with the utmost frankness:

"Mr. Marsh, I am sure you will tear down No. 91 and put up the right kind of a building in its place. Of course you are convinced now that the structure is a mistake in every particular." "I—I don't know. I certainly did not know what sort of a building it was—it would prove to be," Mr. Marsh stammered.

"Then of course your judgment and humanity together will prompt you to put up a safe, sanitary, comfortable building," Miss Andrews continued calmly.

"I will have to give the matter—ah—considerable consideration," Mr. Marsh replied, with caution. "It will be very expensive to tear it down." "It costs lives. Are they not of more value, Mr. Marsh, than money?" She said it calmly, but the repressed passion of a lifetime of patient endurance for the love of the people pulsed through every syllable. A voice of tenderest eloquence could not have been more definitely emphatic.

"I shall have to consider it," the man murmured uneasily. The events of the strange day had produced a curious result in him. He was not certain that he could trust his impulses. At the same time he felt moved to action of some kind. Miss Andrews quietly began to talk of something else. John Gordon, who had leaned over the table, intensely interested in what he supposed was going to be an appeal on Miss Andrews' part, gradually relaxed his attitude into one of disappointed surprise. Miss Andrews was still talking easily, and Mr. Marsh was listening intently, when one of the residents came in and called John Gordon out to answer a summons at the telephone.

Gordon came back soon and said his friend Barton had sent for him, and that he might not return that night. Mr. Marsh rose and said, "I'll go along with you, Gordon, as far as you go my way."

He said good night to Miss Andrews and the two passed out from under the archway, and when he and Gordon parted uptown Mr. Marsh said with a short laugh:

"Miss Andrews came near making me a convert. But it would kill me to live there and see those things every day. I don't see how she stands such a life." Gordon did not reply. He had spoken hardly a word all the way. The weight of all the misery that lay on the people bore him down. In the presence of this oversensitive, cultured, wealthy man who had it in his power to right the wrongs that were connected with his own possessions, Gordon felt a repulsion that he feared would break out in words or manner. Would Mr. Marsh do anything? Would he correct any of the abuses? Why did Miss Andrews cease so suddenly to talk about it? Why did she not plead with him? She seemed on the point of doing so. In a moment of impulse he spoke, as Mr. Marsh was moving away.

"Mr. Marsh, you have it in your power to save the lives of those children. If Louie dies in that hole, before God, I believe you will be held part guilty in the sight of God. Are you going to do anything?" "I'll do something," Mr. Marsh replied feebly.

"Then in God's name do it quick, won't you?" "I'll consider it, yes, I'll consider it," Gordon let him go with that, and with the weariness of the day bearing down on his spirit he hastened to Barton's rooms, fearing bad news, for Barton had telephoned himself, asking his friend to come at once.

before Barton was asleep, an unnatural slumber, more like death than healthy refreshing of wearied powers. His whole attitude was that of complete exhaustion. The seal of death was upon him.

Gordon gave him the medicine, and Barton lay back exhausted. After a moment he whispered:

"Read the story if you want to. But, if you are going to swear or anything at the close and want help, ask Williams to go out into the hall. Give him a dollar, and he'll pitch into Harris and the News as long as you want."

John Gordon picked up the paper and went over by the table. He almost saw the News, and he never read it. His whole repressed nature rebelled at the monotony of yellow journalism, but his curiosity was strong enough to make him read what Barton seemed so genuinely sorrow for.

The headlines were bold and obtrusive: "Quarrels With His Father! John Gordon, Son of Rufus Gordon, the Banker and Stock Manipulator, Goes to Live at Hope House. A Rich Slumlord. Breaks With His Father, Miss Luella Marsh. A Stormy Interview. Miss Marsh Refuses to Go With Him. All the Parties Prominent in Business and Social Circles. Mr. Gordon Repudiates His Son. Miss Marsh Refuses to Talk. Does Not Deny Interview With Her Father. John Gordon Makes a Special Study of Tenement House Conditions in Bowen Street."

The whole "story" occupied two columns, and directly under the headlines, were two cuts, one of John Gordon, the other of Luella Marsh. The title under these cuts read, "Cupid Balks at Social Sacrifice."

John Gordon read the headlines and glared at the pictures. Then he crushed the paper between his hands and flung it on the floor. "Ring the bell for Williams, John. I think he's in the pantry. You need his help to do justice. Sorry I don't feel able to chip in with you."

For a moment John Gordon stood by the table; then he came over and sat down by his friend. "I don't care for myself, but Luella! David, it's a horrible invasion of all one's sacred private affairs. I have never understood how you could believe in that sort of journalism."

David Barton looked longingly at John Gordon. His cynical, whimsical, reckless manner disappeared for a moment. "I don't believe in it. Never did, John. It's purely business with me. I'm awfully sorry for you. What do I believe anyway? My whole life has been a struggle. But maybe that's the hope for me yet. What do you think? Am I too bad to repent and be saved?"

John Gordon stared at his friend, and in a moment his own deep, abiding, religious experience reminded him that here was a soul groping after light. "David," he exclaimed softly, "no one is too bad to repent and be saved. Oh, David, Christ makes all life worth while."

He cannot live!" "God bless him! The old lady exclaimed, and her tears fell fast. After awhile she said gently:

"Do you think I might see him? I would like to look on his face."

For answer John Gordon rose, parted the curtains and beckoned. The old lady followed and soon stood looking at the wasted face.

She stood a moment silently gazing, then she put out a hand, which Gordon had noted before as astonishingly white and beautiful for such an aged person, and softly touched Barton's head. As she straightened up and stepped back, Gordon saw that she was much agitated. He offered her assistance to walk back into the hall. She accepted with an old-fashioned acknowledgment of his politeness that touched him deeply.

"When they were in the hall she said, 'Will you tell him I came to see him?'"

Gordon was thinking it over. Would Barton care to have his secret known? "Yes, I will tell him."

"I think it will be better to let him know. Yes, it will be better," the old lady said with approval. "The time will not be long. Will you write me when the end comes for him?"

"Yes, madam. I thank you for him that you came."

"The pilgrimage is brief at the longest," she said with a strong gravity that was far from gloom. "But surely your friend has redeemed his time. I am glad I saw his face. Yes, glad," Gordon offered to see her to the train, but she firmly refused to be any trouble to any one. "I am able to go alone. A carriage is waiting for me. Good night, sir, and God be with you."

"Good night, madam," replied Gordon. Williams appeared and opened the door. Gordon insisted on seeing her down the steps and into the carriage. He had shut the door and the driver had just started his horse when the old lady stepped the driver with a word, her fine sharp cut face looking out of the window.



"Who are you?"

PICKINGS FROM FICTION

Ambitious people must always be appointed people.—"Fame For a Woman."

The best kind of courage often comes from a full stomach.—"Captain Melvin."

Love is like honey—it must be taken by sips. One must not swim in it.—"The Pharaoh and the Priest."

The man who is weakened in worldly doing by the ingratitude of others serving God on a salary basis.—"The Power of Truth."

Nine times out of ten a woman is through love, and she must be reached by love if she is to be restored.—"Down In Water Street."

Don't call yourself a friend and be thinking all the time what the other side of the friendship can do for you.—"Aunt Abby's Neighbors."

Philosophy is primarily a matter of food; secondarily, a matter of clothes; it does not concern the head at all.—"Two Thousand Miles on an Automobile."

Half the trouble of this troubled world comes from the fact that, for one reason or another, women are not able to look up to the men with whom they have dealings.—"The Vultures."

A Couple of Inscriptions.

"I was in New York one day and took a trip down to Coney Island," said the agent of a Pittsburg pull mill. "I had heard of the sick fellows down there, and so I left my watch at home and carried a dummy across which I patted a slip of paper bearing the words, 'Look inside for a fool.' I hadn't got the salt taste of the ocean yet when the watch disappeared, and it was three hours later, as I sat in a booth drinking beer, when I felt that watch in a side pocket of my coat. I pulled it out in amazement, and I found my slip of paper replaced by one bearing the words, 'Look outside for an ass.' It may be that I got the bulge on the gang, but somehow I have always thought that they came out a trifle ahead—just a trifle."

SICKROOM PHILOSOPHY.

Never confine a patient to one room if you can obtain the use of two.

Never play the piano to a sick person if you can play on strings or sing.

Never stand and fidget when a sick person is talking to you. Sit down.

Never complain that you cannot get a feeding cup if there is a teapot to be had instead.

Never read fast to a sick person. The way to make a story seem short is to tell it slowly.

Never judge the condition of your patient from his appearance during a conversation. See how he looks an hour afterward.

Never put a hot water bottle next to the skin. Its efficiency and the patient's safety are both enhanced by surrounding the bottle with flannel.

Never allow the patient to take the temperature in the gang. Many patients are more knowing than nurses where there is a question of temperature.

Very conservative in all matters are the Turks, and especially slow to adopt modern improvements of any kind.

When a man quits smoking and goes to chewing he is not much of a hero.—"Aitchison Globe."