The Reformer

By CHARLES M. SHELDON,

Author of "In His Steps," "Robert Hardy's Seven Days," Etc.

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"You've nothing more than this?" the judge asked. His voice was again soft and his manner meditative.

"Nothing more." John Gordon hesitated. "Miss Andrews was with me and Mr. Ford when we took the measurements. She could verify their accuracy."

"Is she here?"

"No, but she could be summoned."

"It isn't necessary. I'll go down there myself and make the measurements. It is possible some mistake has been made by one side or the other. Gentlemen, I desire your attendance while the court adjourns to Bowen street."

If a bomb had exploded in the face of Tommy Randall and his lawyer, they could not have been more thoroughly dumfounded. The lawyer hastily whispered to his client. Tommy smiled in a ghastly manner.

"It is possible, of course, your honor, that the city engineer has made a mistake in his figures. Mistakes are possible in surveys and measurements, as can be easily shown by reference to official records."

The little company rose to greet him.

Justice Chambers made no reply. Probably a more speechless group of men never traveled in the electric cars together than that on which made the trip from the police judge's court, No. 9, to the Waterside district.

When Bowen street was reached, the five men walked over to the site of Tommy's double decker.

Judge Julius Chambers secured a mason's measuring line from one of the workmen. Then he turned somewhat grimly to Tommy Randall.

"I suppose you can trust me to measure correctly?"

Tommy murmured something. So did the attorney. It may be remarked in passing that it was not exactly a prayer that either man uttered.

Calling one of the masons to help, Judge Chambers measured off the foundation walls. Then he put down some figures on a card. Then he straightened up and said in a peculiarly soft voice:

"I get your measurements, Mr. Gordon, just ninety-eight feet. Court is adjourned to the station, and I desire the attendance of all the parties in the case."

Not a word was said by any one on the way back. Gordon was singing in his soul a song of hope. Here was a Daniel come to judgment. Whenever before in the history of that city had a public judge or any other ever done a thing like this? The spectacled, soft voiced young man suddenly loomed up before Gordon as a most imposing figure.

Back in court again, Judge Julius Chambers, relieving the assistant judge who had taken his place in his absence, confronted the parties in the case. His voice was ringing now; no softness or meditation in his manner.

"Tommy Randall, this court finds you guilty of the charge named in the warrant, and I fine you the maximum penalty, which is a fine of $300, with an added sentence of sixty days in jail, unless the building is changed in its construction within thirty days to conform to existing ordinances. I may add that while it is possible the city engineer may have made a mistake in his figures, it is my deliberate conviction that a conspiracy of a grave character has been entered into here by you, Mr. Randall, to deceive the court, and if such conspiracy can be shown to exist, as I shall do my utmost to prove, it will be a penitentiary case for both you and your attorney. Call the next case."

Tommy Randall's attorney had a face the color of dirty putty. Tommy himself glared at the judge and then at Gordon. He finally, with a great effort, pulled himself together and went out with his lawyer after the latter had gone through the regular formality of appealing the case to the court of appeals.

All the way to Hope House Gordon and Ford felt like executing a dance of some kind in the car. Once in the familiar library, they related the whole affair to Miss Andrews and the delighted settlement workers.

"This means the beginning of the end for Tommy Randall," said Ford.

Miss Andrews shook her head.

"Tommy appealed the case. He will get out there. Remember he has never yet been convicted. To-day's experience was only a scratch to him. He has not yet been seriously hurt. You do not know him as I do."

"But Chambers does not intend to let the other matter rest. It was a plain case of conspiracy and deliberate effort to deceive the court."

Miss Andrews shook her head again.

"Tommy is an old fox. He made a mistake in not measuring Judge Chambers aright. But now that he knows him he will be cautious. I confess I have very little hope of his ultimate conviction."

"But he will have to change the building, won't he?" one of the young women asked.

"It's my opinion the masons will be at work tomorrow just the same, and

Neither said a word.

no change will be made. My dear, you do not know Tommy Randall nor appreciate his power. I do, to my cost."

In the morning Gordon and Miss Andrews went over to the site of the tenement, accompanied by Ford, Miss Hammond and nearly all the workers.

The masons had begun their day's work. In answer to questions they said they had received no orders to change anything.

"It's easy to say, I told you so!" Miss Andrews calmly spoke as the little company slowly went back to the house. "Of course, pending the decision of the case in the court of appeals, Tommy will go on with the building, because he feels sure the decision there will reverse Chambers' decision."

"Then I don't see as we can do anything," said Gordon dejectedly.

"Yes, you've done something to get Tommy Randall convicted in any court at all."

"But I don't see that the conviction hurts him any. He ought to be in jail. Instead of that, he's going right on with his lawlessness just the same as if he hadn't been found guilty at all," said one of the young women.

Gordon looked at Miss Andrews. She smiled sadly.

"Yes," she replied in answer to his question, "unless Judge Julius Chambers can scotch this viper more seriously than this I anticipate nothing except endless delay of the case in the court of appeals. There is a case there now that was appealed by Tommy three years ago. It is a case of law's delay, and we seem powerless to do anything."

"Somehow I have hope in Chambers. Did you see the account in the Index this morning? That sounded like him."

"I saw that," Ford spoke up brightly. "It gave Tommy a great roast, I tell you."

The article referred to in the morning Index was a conspicuous column account of the conviction of Tommy Randall in public court on a charge sworn out by the Hope House people. It was a scathing article, written by some one who had dipped his pen in something more than a hired reporter's ink bottle. There was a scorching vigor to it that drove the fact deep home to the reader that Tommy Randall was murdering little children in Ward 18 by his construction contrary to law of tenements like the one that made possible the recent tenement house tragedy. The article concluded with these words:

Will the people endure this sort of thing much longer? Tommy Randall is not an abstraction. He is 200 pounds of coarse flesh and bad blood, which spits on the law and says to the people, "You mind your own business." For thirty years Tommy Randall has ruled Waterside district like a tyrant. He has no office in the service of the people. He works at no trade. He is not elected to any position in the city. Yet he has grown rich from his blackmail of saloons, gambling dens, houses of vice and business firms in the district. His trade is in flesh and blood. No slave driver ever employed more artful means to trap his victims or more brutality in riveting on their manacles, and the horror of the whole affair is intensified by the fact that this creature who is after all the tool of the machine that created him has actually persuaded the miserable wretches who nourish him that he is their best friend. There will be no release from this slavery until the machine that made Tommy Randall what he is has been broken in pieces by the people so that it can neither turn out any more product like him or keep in power what has already been brought into existence. We say, Smash the machine. The people are able to do it. Will they do it?

The Review also contained a good account of Tommy's case in the police court and in addition cited in full the blue print incident and boldly denounced the lawyer and the boss for attempt at conspiracy to deceive the court. Three other papers had more or less extended notice of the event, and all of them were unfavorable to Tommy. This was the more significant as two of the papers had been for the administration.

"There's hope here," Miss Andrews said that evening as the little settlement family was gathered in the family library and the accounts in the different papers were being reviewed. "Maybe this is the first murmuring of the people. God grant"—

The bell rang, and a visitor was announced.

Mr. Julius Chambers came in, and the little company around the table rose to greet him. The slight, pale faced figure with the gold rimmed spectacles was at that moment the most interesting personality, next to their own head, in all the city. "I've had in mind to come here for some time," he said to Miss Andrews when they were all seated again. "I want to know you and your work at first hand. Unless I am mistaken the storm center of the next campaign will be somewhere in this vicinity."

"Will you be anywhere near the center of that center?" asked Gordon, leaning over and looking at Chambers intensely.

"By the grace of God, Mr. Gordon, I want to be as near the center of it as I can get, and nothing would please me more than to have your company."

Gordon tingled all over. He arose and put out his hand. The judge took it. Neither said a word, but from that minute the two men were knit to each other.

They sat late that night around the library table, the most enthusiastic, interested and in some ways the most unselfish group of men and women in that city. Gordon and Chambers laid out a plan of campaign. It included the use of every moral and Christian force in the city. And the message they were to bring to the people was the message of murdered childhood, the double decker for a background, the political boss a necessary result of politics that lived on its spoils and cared no more for humanity's loss and ruin than any machine cares for the dust that whirls through its mechanism, to be blown out over the world or trod under foot to rise and be swept again into the rush of the wheels that with metallic heartlessness grind on, doing the will of their maker, but caring for no man's soul.

It seemed to them all during the weeks that followed that the city was awakening to some stern reality of its moral obligations. As the young judge had said that night when he appeared at Hope House, "The hour of the people is at hand." He himself, sometimes alone, oftener with Gordon or Falmouth, night after night addressed great mass meetings held under the direction of church or temperance or municipal reform bodies. Falmouth and a score of other ministers organized the young people into campaign material. The pulpit began to speak out. The papers contained columns of very free advertising of Tommy Randall and his methods. Chambers' voice spoke through an astonishing number of editorials and other articles, exposing long standing cases of awful incompetency and fraud in the city government. The storm of the people's fury rose and grew with every night's gathering, and the storm center was literally the Waterside district.

Under the leadership of Gordon, Chambers and Falmouth hundreds of business men visited the tenement houses and saw for the first time the horrors that were intensified by the machine. Hundreds of them were taken by Miss Andrews or Gordon to Tommy Randall's double decker, which had gone steadily up through all the rising of the storm, and the lawlessness of his acts was a visible illustration of the whole situation. Miss Andrews had written to Mrs. Captain George Effingham telling her the situation, and that old lady had replied: "Use the first hundred thousand if necessary in carrying on the campaign and the second also. I will try to find some more if you only succeed in cleaning out Mr. Thomas Randall."

So the settlement workers thanked God and plunged into the thick of the fight as it grew in power, for every saloon interest, every gambling hell, every house of evil fame, fought for its miserable life. For once almost like magic, to the astonishment of evil, all the good of the city appeared to be united, on its knees praying, on its feet working. And as the campaign drew near its climax every dark and hideous viper that had fattened in the security of years of protection from the city crawled out of its hole and showed its ugly and poisonous front, rearing it against an assault that for the first time in history was really doing something to vindicate the name of the stern righteousness of God in men.

One morning John Gordon, going by Tommy Randall's double decker, found it deserted of workmen. It had gone up three stories and a half.

When Miss Andrews heard the news, she said: "That means that Tommy is in need of campaign funds. He has spent a fortune already. If that dumbbell is never finished"—

"We will let it stand as a monument of victory," said Gordon.

Two evenings later Gordon, Falmouth, Chambers and Miss Andrews went together to a monster mass meeting. All four of them spoke. Miss Andrews was received with a great demonstration. When Chambers spoke, it was noticeable that hundreds of men and women representing the wealth and fashion of the city were there, and that, although he uttered the most scathing rebuke of the selfish wealthy people who shunned all civic responsibility, they listened with positive admiration to a speech that was a torrent of eloquence, for Chambers was an aristocrat himself and could not be repudiated by any of the city's most cultured or refined circles. Mrs. Penrose was present that night with Luella and Archie. They all heard Miss Andrews, with genuine surprise at her ability. Chambers provoked their applause even while he angered them by his prophet's denunciation of their wicked selfishness. Falmouth's speech was a calm but earnest appeal to the conscience, and every hearer was more honestly thoughtful for it. Then Gordon rose.

He had gained amazingly in the power to address a great crowd. He simply told the story of the tenements out of his own experience. He made no plea; he uttered no denunciation; simply told how childhood was tortured and crushed and stifled and murdered in the double deckers. His story was the story of childhood's rights. It made a tremendous impression. Mrs. Penrose bent her head, and her lips whispered the litany:

"O Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon me."

Luella never took her eyes off John Gordon's face. As he drew near the end she noted the extreme exhaustion of his whole bearing. And as he finished and sat down she observed Miss Andrews, who was seated behind Gordon, lean forward and ask him something.

Then as the chairman of the meeting was making some announcement for another gathering Luella saw Chambers and Falmouth suddenly rise and go over to Gordon just as he swayed and would have fallen. The two friends caught him and quickly carried him off the stage. Miss Andrews followed them, and the great audience began to go out.

Luella hesitated. Mrs. Penrose had not seen anything. She had not been looking.

"I think Mr. Gordon was ill," Luella said.

"Shall we wait and inquire?" Mrs. Penrose asked quickly.

"I'll go up and see about it." Archie suddenly volunteered.

He went up and crossed the stage and disappeared. When he came back after a few minutes, he said that Gordon had been removed to Hope House, and no one seemed to know just what the trouble was.

"Nothing serious, I think," Mrs. Penrose remarked. "We'll telephone down when we get home."

Word was sent back by one of the settlement workers in answer to Mrs. Penrose's inquiry that Gordon was ill, but it was not possible yet to say how seriously. Mrs. Penrose sent word to Luella and added that if Luella wished she would go down to Hope House with her next day and inquire. Luella replied that she did not think it necessary, and Mrs. Penrose did not press the matter.

But three days later Luella was in the drawing room when a visitor was announced.

"Miss Andrews from Hope House," said the servant.

Luella rose to meet her as she entered. Bot women were very grave. Luella trembled as she motioned Grace Andrews to a seat.

CHAPTER XII.

She put her lips on John Gordon's hand.

"I CAME to tell you, Miss Marsh, that Mr. Gordon is very ill. It is doubtful"—

"That dreadful place and work have killed him!" exclaimed Luella. Her face had paled at sight of Miss Andrews. It blanched now, and her exclamation contained a certain tone of reproach as if the woman in front of her were to blame.

"And, if they have, is it not better for him to die there after having fought a good fight for humanity than to live elsewhere and carry no burdens that kill?"

It was a question provoked by the entire social cruelty of that world represented by such women as Luella and Mrs. Penrose. The gentle, patient, sacrificing spirit of the blue eyed woman who had given her whole life to lift the human burden burst out of its habitual repression of feeling and swept up and over Luella as if she were the incarnation of social selfishness which in all great cities of the world seeks ease and pleasure and luxury and denies all claims of brotherhood, refuses to share its strength with the weak and never dreams of such a thing as personal responsibility for childhood's ways of mankind's suffering.

It seemed a long time that Luella was silent. After awhile she raised her eyes to Miss Andrews.

"I am all that you think I am. And yet"—

"And yet, Miss Marsh, John Gordon loves you. He wants to see you before he"—

"Did he send you here?"

"No. But I know he longs to see you. Will you come?"

"Yes," Luella trembled. "But I am sure he does not love me! Oh, Miss Andrews! Have pity on me! If I loved him truly, would I refuse to accept his test for me? Why do I shrink from that?"

"Do you expect me to answer all the contradictions of your heart? You have been born into a social life that reckons up its wealth in physical things. It is also true—pardon me for saying it—but it is true that you women of wealth and social activities are as a class destitute of any real love for humanity. You can feel remorse or momentary pity. You will weep at the representation of wrongs upon the stage in a well lighted, warmed and upholstered theater from a comfortable seat for which you have paid an exorbitant price, but you will not take the price of that seat and go with it yourself to a real human sufferer, or if you do it it is in a spasmodic effort to relieve a dull day or a compound with a cold science that will not always leave you alone in your selfishness. The broad basic element of genuine love of humanity is not known by you or women like you. The richest, most cultured, most favored women in this city are as a rule destitute of real human love for the masses. They are born without it, they live without it and, may God have mercy on them, they will die without it and receive the final condemnation spoken to those who, like the rich man in Jesus' story, have their good things in this world, but will be shut out by an impassable chasm from the love of Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham."

Again the spirit of this woman, who had for all those dreary years of long suffering bearing felt the crushing weight of a proud city's wealth in a fashion which lifted no finger to help in proportion to its opportunity, ability, rose up and flowed over its lifelong repression in the presence of a woman [illegible] and refused the great love of a [illegible] because she did not want to miss the things that Lazarus had to do without.

And again Luella was painfully still. She uttered no denial; she apparently did not resent a syllable. She simply looked down, folding her hands in her lap, and Miss Andrews, gazing at her, could see no sign of anger or pride.

But suddenly Luella rose, and stretching out her hands toward her visitor, she said, while tears were in her eyes:

"All this may be true, but you say he is dying. Is it the time to say all this to me now? I love him! I do love him! You do not, or you would not be saying these things to me now—while he is dying!"

She came up close to Miss Andrews and stood near her, with her hands clinched and her whole attitude expressive of the deepest feeling. "It is no wonder John Gordon loved her," Grace Andrews said to herself with a pang at the thought of a beauty that had been dulled by years of contact with trouble, for Luella was magnificent in her strong young womanhood, and it needed only that one human love for the multitude to make her a creature of boundless affections worthy of the bravest, best man that ever lived.

"I did not say he was dying. He is very ill. The issue is doubtful. But he is perfectly conscious, and it may be—it may be—that your presence will help him."

"Come, then, let us go," said Luella.

On the way to Hope House Luella asked again if John Gordon had sent for her.

"He has spoken your name," Miss Andrews hesitated, "but he has not asked to see you."

"Then I am going to see him on your invitation?"

"Yes," she replied simply.

"He will not care to see me," Luella spoke as if to herself, and Miss Andrews did not reply to her.

When they reached the house, Luella was so agitated that she asked to be left alone in the library a little while. When she came to Miss Andrews and told her she was ready, Miss Andrews could not avoid almost a feeling of pity for her.

"Is he very ill?" Luella asked.

"You must be prepared for a great change in him," Miss Andrews said. When she reached Gordon's room, Ford came to the door. He had been nursing Gordon. When Luella entered, Ford and Miss Andrews went out and knew that as they left the room Luella had kneeled at the side of the bed and put her lips on John Gordon's hand.

She was not prepared for the sight of such a change in so short a time. But Gordon had thrown himself into the problem of Hope House from the first day of his residence with a whole souled abandon that had told tremendously on his vitality. The daily strain on his sympathies, the apparent hopelessness of the effort to remove causes, the unceasing call on heart and mind, had burned like a fever in his life, and when the city campaign came on he was not at all prepared for its incessant demand on physical and mental resources. Nevertheless he had flung all caution aside night after night, even when he felt growing on him the weariness that, like a leaden weight, hung on heart and brain. The collapse came inevitably, and his condition was critical. It was the old story of driving the machine beyond its powers and without sufficient care for the delicate mechanism of nerves and heart and tissues.

"John," said Luella as she kneeled there, and he felt a tear fall on the hand she held, "you do not doubt my love for you, do you? Why did you not send for me yourself?"

"You are here, Luella. That is all I want."

He spoke with great effort. He was conscious of a weakness that made him cling to any strong nature like a drowning man. His whole interview with Luella must be interpreted in the light of that weakness. His mind was feeling vaguely for relief from a dark, hopeless falling down into some unreachable place where Luella could not come. He had not strength even to return the clasp of her cold fingers, and she was terrified as she saw his helplessness and thought he might pass away even during the brief time she felt she ought to be there with him.

"Promise me, Luella, that you will—will—be my wife. Let us give ourselves to the cause of childhood suffering—these—these—awful places"—

"Oh, I promise; yes, yes, John! Dear, I will come here and live anywhere—anywhere—if you will not die"—

She clung to his hand, and he smiled.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

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"Do you ever have your own way?" asked the cynical near relative.

"Yes," answered Mr. Meek. "Sometimes I have my own way—but not without consulting Henrietta first carefully before I make up my mind."—Washington Star.

She Did Her Best.

Mrs. Uppmann—I must tell you, I'm sure that I was displeased at your entertaining that policeman in the kitchen last night.

Della—Faith, Oi did ax him into the parlor, ma'am, but he wouldn't come.—Philadelphia Press.

The Usual Fate.

Contentment's better far, they say
Than wealth, but Oh, my brother!
We just plod on from day to day
With neither one nor t'other.
—Philadelphia Press.

HOW, INDEED!

"Why, Mabel! I'm surprised you should read such a shocking book."

"Yes, but how can I tell other shocking it is if I don't read it?"—Chicago American.