

The REFORMER

By CHARLES M. SHILDON.
Author of "His Steps," "Robert Hardy's Seven Days," etc.

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Archie turned around and laughed. It was a laugh that made his aunt shudder. It was the laugh of society at its worst, the laugh of indifference that for all the centuries has faced humanity's woes with dance and jest, and flung to the beggar the crumbs of the feast.

"Well, aunt, you're a good one! Miss Andrews couldn't do better. Why don't you offer her your services as lecturer? If you got off all that stuff in the drawing rooms, it would create a sensation, and of course it would fill the contribution boxes when they were passed for the cause."

Mrs. Penrose did not answer. She lay back in her chair, her eyes closed, and to Archie's great surprise when she opened her eyes tears were on the lashes. To his added surprise his aunt arose and went out of the room. She was gone several minutes. When she came back, she spoke as if nothing had been said of an unusual nature.

"Miss Marsh and I are going down to Hope House tomorrow afternoon to see Miss Andrews and the place. Will you go with us?"

"To Hope House?"

"I said so. Miss Andrews has invited me to come several times. I contributed a little at the time of the fire. So did Luella. Miss Andrews wants us to see what has been done. I have never been down there, neither has Luella. Of course you never have. If you care to go, I'll speak for Luella that she will not object to your escort."

"Why, I'll go all right. Tomorrow afternoon?"

"Yes. We'll start from here promptly at 2."

"All right." He started to go and then hesitated.

"Promise me, aunt, you will not prejudice Luella against me."

"No need. You do all that is necessary without any help." She had evidently not forgotten his indictment of her social weakness.

"You'll see. Luella Marsh will be my wife one of these days."

"She has my sympathy when the day arrives."

"Look here, Aunt Constance!" He spoke almost brutally, coming back into the room. "If you feel that way, why do you ask me to go with her and you tomorrow?"

"I want you to see some human misery before you die. I want you to know that God has some good reason for the judgment he will some time deliver to your selfish soul."

"How about yours?"

"And again he laughed the laugh that centuries of idle society has not been able to soften or civilize.

"And mine, too," she answered, with a deep gravity that made her nephew stare in astonishment.

"Well, I'll be here at 2," he said as he turned from her. "I don't care what your reason is, but I'll go anywhere Luella goes."

When he had gone, Mrs. Constance Penrose did a remarkable thing, or at



He simply bowed.

least those who thought they knew her best would have been astonished if they had seen it.

She went into her room and knelt at a little desk upon which lay an open prayer book. It was opened at the Litany, and with whispering lips she repeated the familiar prayers beginning with the words:

From all evil and mischief; from sin; from the crafts and assaults of the devil; from the wrath, and everlasting damnation.

Good Lord, deliver us.

From all blindness of heart; from pride, vain-glory, and hypocrisy; from envy, hatred, and malice, and all uncharitableness.

Good Lord, deliver us.

From all inordinate and sinful affections; and from all the desires of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Good Lord, deliver us.

From lightning and tempest; from plague, pestilence, and famine; from battle and murder, and from sudden death.

Good Lord, deliver us.

From all sedition, pious conspiracy, and rebellion; from all false doctrine, heresy, and schism; from hardness of heart and contempt of thy Word and Commandment.

Good Lord, deliver us.

By the mystery of thy holy Incarnation; by thy holy Nativity and Circumcision; by thy Baptism, Fasting, and Temptation.

Good Lord, deliver us.

By thine Agony and bloody Sweat; by thy Cross and Passion; by thy precious Death and Burial; by thy glorious Resurrection and Ascension; and by the coming of the Holy Ghost.

Good Lord, deliver us.

In all time of our tribulation; in all time of our prosperity; in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment.

Good Lord, deliver us.

Then turning the page she went on

her sister, who had given up so much to gain apparently so little.

"Pardon me, Miss Andrews, now that I have placed you, I cannot help wondering how you came to leave such a splendid social position for—"

"For such a splendid social opportunity?" Miss Andrews smiled her rare smile. And then in answer to Mrs. Penrose she recited softly George MacDonald's verses with a power that even Archie Penrose stop his nervous fidgeting, although he did not comprehend the meaning of the verses to the three women.

I said, I will walk in the fields. God said, Nay, walk in the town.

I said, There are no flowers there. He said, No flowers but a crown.

I said, But the fog is thick and clouds are veiling the sun.

He answered, But hearts are sick and souls in the dark and lone.

I said, But the stars are black; there is nothing but noise and din.

And he wept as he led me back. There is more.

He said, There is sin.

I said, I shall miss the light, and friends will miss me, they say.

He answered, Choose ye tonight if I must miss you or they.

I pleaded for time to be given. He said, It is hard to decide.

It will not seem best to heaven to follow the steps of your guide.

There was a moment of intense stillness when she had finished. There was a hint of tears in Mrs. Penrose's eyes. Luella sat with her hands in her lap gazing at Miss Andrews intently.

If John Gordon should love this other woman, would it not be the simple attraction of one soul that has obeyed the voice that says "follow me," at the cost of physical things, drawing another soul that is also living in obedience to the same voice?

Miss Andrews suddenly rose and went to one of the windows that looked out over the burned district.

"Excuse me, I am, of course, specially interested in our plans at present."

Mr. Gordon, with some of the residents, has been looking over the ground with reference to our new park. You have heard of our recent good fortune? We are living in a high state of excitement down here.

A friend has given us \$200,000, and we are trying to see how much fun we can have in spending it. If you will come here, I can point out our proposed plan, or would you like to go out there? We can look over the house when we come back."

"We shall be interested to go outside and look over the plan there," Mrs. Penrose assented, and they all passed out and walked slowly down toward the group of men who were at the end of the street, opposite the block that had been the last to burn.

As they drew nearer one of the men left the group and came down toward them. It was John Gordon, and even at that distance it was very evident that he was unusually content about something.

He was so absorbed in the matter that he was exclaiming that when he met Miss Andrews with her visitors for the first time he spoke to her as if he did not recognize the others.

"That scoundrel, Tommy Randall, Miss Andrews! Do you know what he has succeeded in doing?"

He had said that much when he realized who the visitors were. But even then the passion of the information he had come to give Miss Andrews was so strong that he simply bowed to Mrs. Penrose and Luella as if he were in the habit of meeting them every day in Bowen street, and nodded to Penrose, as if Penrose was a familiar sight in the neighborhood of Hope House.

"What has Tommy Randall done now?" Miss Andrews questioned, with a faint smile. "Tommy Randall does the heavy lifting in Ward 18," she said to Mrs. Penrose.

"Randall has bought up lots all over this burned district. He has closed contracts for half a dozen double deckers like the one Mr. Marsh had put up."

John Gordon continued, entirely unmindful of Luella, or, at least, careless of the effect of what he said upon her. "He has worked all this time we have been discussing the park plan. But how could we do anything?" Gordon spoke in despair, addressing Miss Andrews as if she were the only person present.

"We only had the money to purchase anything last night. We never dreamed that anything would get in the way of our purchase of at least half the area. Randall has secured his lots all over the district. If he puts up those double deckers, he ought to be arrested for murder. That is what the buildings result in."

Luella flushed and then defiantly looked at Gordon as he unceremoniously said the last words looking at her. The expression on her face smote John Gordon into a sudden realization of all his surroundings. Miss Andrews stood quietly gazing over the dreary pile of rubbish. A man left the group at the point where Gordon had been standing and came walking deliberately toward them.

"It's Tommy Randall. If he attempts to insult you, Miss Andrews—"

As he spoke Gordon laid his finger for a second on Miss Andrews' arm. He was standing close by her, and the movement was perfectly natural. Luella noticed the color in Miss Andrews' face as she moved a little away from Gordon and said:

"He will not insult me."

"If almost wish he would insult some one so that I could have some excuse for knocking him down," Gordon answered. Neither Miss Andrews nor Luella had ever seen him so angry.

Mrs. Penrose watched all this with gleaming eyes. It had become exceedingly interesting to her. Archie was over her shoulder, and she was at the window between his disgust at the lawless surroundings and his wonder at what would be the result of the encounter between Randall and Miss Andrews. Luella had no thought for anything except that movement which John Gordon had made as if to protect Miss Andrews. And all of them faced the man as he came up, entirely ignorant of his purpose in seeking an interview, but two of them at least fully aware that, whatever it was, it concealed some evil, and one of them praying in her heart, strong heart for some way of deliverance, that her love for the children of her desolate parish might, and expression before God's sunlight and flowers closed to some of them on this earth forever.

CHAPTER X.



Miss Andrews placed her fingers on his arm.

W HATEVER else Tommy Randall lacked, he did not lack the most absolute confidence in his position as boss of Ward 18. As he came up to the little group of which Miss Andrews was the central figure not even her thorough knowledge of the man's peculiarly insidious hold on the situation was sufficient to give her a real insight into the motive which prompted him to face her and John Gordon at a moment when he knew their indignation against him was at its highest.

He took off his hat as he bowed.

"How do, Miss Andrews? I've got some good news for you, and thought maybe you wouldn't object to my bringing it. Lots 17, 19 and 21 back of the settlement have changed hands since the fire. Maybe you didn't know that, but I've had my eye on those lots for some time. Now, I don't mind telling you that I admire your pluck. You've been doing good here, and I want to help in a small way. So I've decided to give the settlement those lots. I understand you've been wanting more room to build on a new hall. This will give you a chance."

He stopped very suddenly and his shifty gray eyes, still fastened on Miss Andrews, had a look of such malignant satisfaction in them that John Gordon wanted to strike him across the mouth. He did not do that, but he did say, as he stepped in front of Miss Andrews, directly between her and Randall:

"When we want any donations from you, we will let you know it. Better take your gifts where they're better appreciated."

The man gave Gordon one evil look. "Am I talking to you? My offer was made to the head of the house. If you are authorized—"

"Miss Andrews is not going to enter into any conversation with you," Gordon spoke with a rising tide of wrath in him that was nearer to actual violence than he had ever been. But the compassion for the hundreds of helpless lives in that hell of misery and with supreme anger against the man who got his living out of it.

"Oh, Mr. Gordon!" Miss Andrews spoke almost timidly. Luella, watching every tone and gesture, noted her apparent willingness to let John Gordon have his way. And indeed, with the exception of those three words addressed to him, Miss Andrews did not speak again during the whole of the strange encounter.

"By your leave, Miss Andrews, I will do the talking, and unless you say otherwise I will take the whole responsibility of refusing any gifts Mr. Randall may, for his own reasons, make the settlement. We know perfectly well how lots 17, 19 and 21 changed hands. We do not care to be receivers of stolen goods."

He said the words looking straight into Tommy Randall's face. Tommy Randall knew as he tried to return the look that there was one man who was not afraid of him, come what might. Nevertheless the boss of Ward 18 had been ruler so long, he had grown so accustomed to regard the methods by which he extorted revenue from his subjects as a legitimate part of the existing political system, that Gordon's almost brutally frank denunciation caused him only a feeling of contempt.

"Just as you say," he answered coolly enough. Lots in Hope House block are not given away every day. I know plenty of men who will help me. I suppose, seeing you are so particular about the lots, you will be over-particular about who gets them?"

He said it with a deliberate suggestiveness so full of possible evil that Gordon was again tempted to knock him down. Nothing but the knowledge of Miss Andrews' presence prevented him. Tommy Randall felt his own power and went a step further.

"Perhaps you would be interested to look at my profoundly insolent but no one said a word. Tommy Randall unrolled the blue print and spread it out before them. With the same degree of fascination that they might have felt in looking at a battlefield during the slaughter John Gordon and Grace Andrews followed the grimy hand of the boss as he described his plan. Mrs. Penrose, Archie and Luella looked on as interested spectators, but to them, especially to Luella, the main interest of the occasion lay not in the dirty blue print, but in the expression and attitude of the settlement workers.

"Here," said Tommy, indicating with a much soiled thumb the spot where he and Gordon had been standing when Miss Andrews and her visitors came out, "is my first building. It is a model tenement, five stories, brick with terra cotta front, all modern improvements. Over here on this corner is to be a saloon and vaudeville. Back here is a workmen's need recreation. No one understands that so well as you do, Miss Andrews. Two blocks west is another tenement. Apartments in these tenements, by the way, are already all spoken for. Corner lot 71, northeast,

over here, is to be occupied by another saloon and vaudeville. Give the people plenty of amusement. Another tenement over here; same style and size as first one. Over there"—he shifted the blue print a little and brought the center of the drawing into plainer view—"is going to be a hall which will be used as headquarters for the ward workers, office, restaurant, etc. We need some accommodation of that sort. Down here, southwest corner district, another tenement, and Avignon puts up his saloon here on this corner. Then over here another tenement, same size, same style. These tenements will relieve the congestion now found around Bowen street. I have in contemplation three, four, five, six, possibly seven. Ground will be broke for the first one over there"—he pointed to the block from which he had come—"tomorrow. I am planning to get everything included before winter. Pretty good plan, eh?"

Miss Andrews' blue eyes gazed at him with their profound look of unmeasured sadness. So might an unsmiling angel of light have looked upon one who had denied his fellowship with the shining hosts of heaven.

But John Gordon had no history of past defeats and long accumulated wrongs to keep him silent like this woman who knew the utter uselessness of threat or appeal. He was at the white heat of passion, and while he held himself in check and spoke coldly enough outwardly, he was really trembling, and Luella began to fear some tragic end to the scene.

"In laying out your measurements for the double decker over there, Mr. Randall, you have not made any allowance for space between front and rear of lot."

"No," said Randall coolly. "We don't want to waste any ground. It's too valuable."

"But how about the city ordinance which provides for a space of twenty-five feet between front and rear houses? I understand your proposed double decker will be four stories in height. The law distinctly says—"

"The law be—"

Mr. Tommy Randall did not say what the law might be on account of ladies being present, but his abrupt silence was no less expressive. He himself broke it with a coarse laugh.

"Young man, you must be very young not to know that Tommy Randall is a law for himself in Ward 18. If he wants to put up a tenement on the whole lot, he does it, and the law ain't going to make any difference."

"You miserable!" John Gordon's wrath flowed over, and he took a step toward the boss. Miss Andrews placed her fingers on his arm as gently and as momentarily as he had placed his on hers, and he stopped as if a bar of steel had been flung up in front of him. Luella, watching everything with observant eyes, saw it all. So did Archie Penrose, and his face expressed a sneering sort of pleasure. Tommy Randall held his ground and began to roll up his blue print.

"Well, I must get along back to my work," he said as he gave the whole company a comprehensive look of triumph. "If you want to buy any lots, why, you know where to come. I understand you've got a little money to invest."

"Look here," Gordon stopped him. "You say you don't care for the law, but I give you warning that I will bring to bear every process known in this city to prevent your violation of these building ordinances."

"Go ahead, young man," said Tommy good naturedly. "I wish you success."

"If there is any such thing as justice left in an American city, I will have it served on you. I will set the whole machinery of the law in motion against you."

"Oh, you make me tired, young fellow. What is the law to me? Do you own the courts?"

"No; do you?"

"Some of 'em." The answer came with absolute effrontery.

"How about Justice Chambers?" Mrs. Penrose asked the question in a sweet voice that startled everybody.

"Justice Chambers? I—I don't recall—ah, yes, the new justice in District 8." There was a note of uneasiness in Tommy's voice that Gordon was quick to detect.

"Mr. Chambers is a cousin of mine—a very brilliant, rising young lawyer."

Mrs. Penrose again spoke in her sweet, cultured voice, and again every one, including the boss, stared at her.

"It makes no difference." The voice of Tommy Randall rose again rough and assertive. "Law or no law, I know what I am doing. Good day, Miss Andrews. Sorry you don't see fit to take the lots. I admire your grit." And he undoubtedly did.

He turned and walked back to the workmen engaged in making measurements, and John Gordon turned to Miss Andrews, exclaiming bitterly: "If this had occurred in fiction, wouldn't they have laughed at it as wildly improbable? Yet here it occurs in one of the greatest cities on the American continent, and we are obliged to accept it as a part of our municipal system of government. Before God, Miss Andrews, can we do less than vow war on all that such a creature represents?"

Bear me witness," he exclaimed, and he was one of the last men in the world to resort to dramatic poses or heroics, "I will exhaust every resource known to man in an attempt to have Tommy Randall obey the laws of this city. He may have robbed us of our proposed plan for parks and playgrounds, but he shall not murder little children and helpless women in these hells of double deckers."

They all walked silently back to Hope House and went into the library. "I don't think any one knows the full extent of Tommy Randall's power," Miss Andrews said, quietly.

"I thought once, a few years ago, that I knew, but I don't. Nobody does, not even himself."

"Of course you have tried to have these building ordinances obeyed?" Gordon spoke it looking at her in great trouble.

Miss Andrews smiled her patient smile that told the story of countless battles, of countless defeats, of heart-sick failure to arouse a civic conscience, of corrupt courts and picked juries, and the whole city lying in a contemptuous apathy that owned no god but Mammon and felt no indignation except that of wrath over the fall of stocks or the thwarting of personal schemes for glory.

"What can be done?" Gordon asked

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"Why don't you put the law on him?" Mrs. Penrose exclaimed impatiently. "There must be some way of executing the ordinances of this city."

"I have used every method within my power during the last twelve years to prevent the violation of these city ordinances relating to the tenement house construction. In every instance, without one exception, we have been thwarted when the case came into court. Mrs. Penrose, you have no conception of the tremendous political and social power back of Tommy Randall. It is an absolute dictatorship. It is true, as he unblushingly says, he or the powers back of him own courts, judges, juries, attorneys. All our appeals to the people themselves have been in vain. As the years have gone on my work has grown to be that of some alleviation of misery; it is not a contribution to the removal of causes. The misery flows on. The best we can do seems to be to make life a little more bearable for children, to put a little light and good cheer into these darkened, saddened lives, to alleviate ever so little their wretchedness. Sometimes I have thought this was all we ever shall do."

Miss Andrews spoke with her usual quiet intensity. There was no whining, not even complaint; simply indomitable patience in the face of everlasting and unrelieved defeat of purposes by a power so grimly fortified with money and social entanglements and vice and appeals to all human passions that it seemed hopeless even to expect relief from its dominating grip on the situation.

"Do you know Julius Chambers?" Mrs. Penrose asked at a moment of thoughtfulness. During that moment she noted with a gleam of quiet satisfaction that John Gordon had gone over by the window and was talking in a low tone to Luella, while Archie, who unfortunately had seated himself on the other side of Miss Andrews, had the length of the room and the big library table between him and the two at the window.

"I have begun to hear about him, as most of us have done here," Miss Andrews answered.

"Let Mr. Gordon see him. There is some hope in that direction, I believe. Julius was a peculiar fellow in college and law school. He has got into his present position, as you know, through a very unusual set of circumstances, and it would be just like him to do something. At any rate he has the ability to do remarkable things."

"It is worth considering," Miss Andrews looked thoughtfully at this woman who had apparently come down to Hope House, like scores of other fine visitors, just to look at a social experiment, but with no deeper or more serious purpose. Would Mrs. Penrose go any further than that? Would she use influence and social grace to put a leverage under a wrong and help overturn it?

Mrs. Penrose slowly and carefully got up and said: "Archie and I would like to look over the house, Miss Andrews, if you can show us. Can you?"

"Come, Archie. Oh, Miss Marsh seems to be interested in her discussion with Mr. Gordon. He can bring her along with him when they are through. What a delightful, old-fashioned hall you have here! I remember hearing my father speak of the time when the Ross family built this mansion. Very inter-

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est." She preceded Miss Andrews into the hall and beckoned to the disgusted Archie, who did not dare disobey. She slowly inspected the new coffee room, and then asked to be shown the recent improvements in the people's assembly hall at the top of the building. She lingered over everything that Miss Andrews had to describe, and it was all of twenty minutes before she entered the library again, the wretched Archie secretly concealing his jealousy and uneasiness.

In twenty minutes a good deal can be said to affect the future of two people who for various reasons have not fully understood each other and are still conscious of an interest in each other that separation seems to intensify.

"What will you do with the money that has been given you if you do not succeed in stopping Mr. Randall's building his tenements?" Luella had asked when Gordon had first stepped up to the window near her.

"We shall succeed in stopping him."

"How?"

"I don't know. But if there is a God, and if there is a conscience in this city and I am spared to do the work God has called me to do, Tommy Randall shall not go on defying all heaven, as he has done these many years. Does that sound like boasting, Luella?"

To be Continued.