

Coming Stories by  
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# The Advocate

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BLUE RIBBON FICTION IS FOUND EVERY WEEK IN  
THE FEATURE SECTION

## What Was Gordon "Born to Be?"

Here Is an Autobiography of a Concert Singer  
Who Rose From Page Boy to an Artist of Note

If you have not read Taylor Gordon's autobiography, "Born to Be," published by Covici Friede in New York a couple of years ago, you have missed a lot.

"Born to Be" is an autobiography in which Mr. Gordon tells of a life that has led from the red-light areas of Montana, through Chicago and St. Paul, to New York.

He has been a porter, a waiter, a chauffeur, a nurse, valet, and a concert singer of spirituals, honored at home and in London.

He took life as he found it, and had a rip-roaring time.

He has met the high brows of the world and found them intensely human, and after a life of thrills has discovered that human nature is about the same, whether its outside covering is black or white.

One of the first positions Gordon had was valet and man Friday to John Ringling, circus owner, who traveled around the country in his private car, the "Sarasota."

Here is an incident from Florida which illustrates the Gordon style:

"I knew I wouldn't be able to be back in Florida soon again, so I

decided to give all the time I could to the copper-colored brown, who lived in the big house across the line. Remember her? I took her out nightly. One Monday morning, I got a letter showing a sketched picture of an automobile dangling by its hind wheels off a bridge, and a Niggah hanging to a tree off side of the creek. At the bottom was written:

"IF YOU DON'T LET THAT GAL ALONE THIS WILL BE A PICTURE OF YOU?"

"It puzzled me a great deal. I said to myself, 'Damn! Have I been flirting with any white gals in Florida?'"

"I began to case every gal and woman I knew in the town. I couldn't place anyone I had been so fly with so much as I should be hanged about. So I showed the note to Sam, my buddie.

"I know that writing; I used to take notes for him—it's the clerk in the bank," he said.

"Clerk in the bank. Hell! I ain't going with his gal, am I? You ain't never seen me with any white gals out of line, have you?" I asked.

"No, she ain't white—that Emma is his gal on the QT. All these peckerwoods run around with these black gals when they can git 'em," he said.

"I took the letter to John Ringling. He is sure one ofay man that didn't find an alibi to get in line with the peckerwoods. He went to town and caught a mob of thirty or more young fellows, standing in front of the barber shop, their evenings' hang-out. The young clerk was with them. Ringling cursed them for all he was worth, called them every low-down word he could think of and told them he'd burn the damn town down if they touched me. After that, when the gang saw me, they would holler at me clear across the street, 'Hallow, Ringlun.'

"They informed anyone that didn't know me that I was Ringlun's nigger and to lay off me. I said to myself, whata hell of a country for me. I can't look at a white woman, and they'll kill me for entertaining a brown one. So every year after that I found the blackest gal in Sarasota for my company and Sam told me I wasn't safe even with her."

### "Go Away Moses" and "Po Old Joe"



Taylor Gordon singing, Rosamond Johnson at the piano, entertaining royalty in London. The English dears got their song titles mixed in requesting numbers. What they wanted Mr. Gordon to sing was, "Go Down Moses" and "Old Black Joe." The spiritual, "All God's Chillun' Got Wings," was asked for at one recital, but the English called it "You Got Boots and I Got Boots." This is a Covarrubias illustration from Mr. Gordon's book, "Born to Be."

### Man of Many Jobs



TAYLOR GORDON

Here is Taylor Gordon who started off as a bellboy in a Montana red light hotel. He's been a chauffeur, valet to John Ringling, the late circus owner; a Pullman porter, waiter, choir singer, bricklayer, elevator boy, nurse, cook, theatre doorman, porter and now radio and concert singer.

### Describes an Ofay Street Fight Outside a London Pub

One of the sights I saw while passing a pub in London interested me. Of course you know all the pub, in London have first, second, and third class stalls for people of different classes. A high-class man wouldn't think of going into a cheap man's stall—neither would a poor person go into a first class stall or anywhere his money didn't fit. I was going over to see Turner Layton of Layton and Johnston, America's most popular entertainers in England, who lived on Doughty Street.

I had to pass up High Holborn to get to Doughty Street from Southampton Row. There must be at least a dozen pubs between the two streets. As I passed one, the usual mob was vacked in it. The kids were playing in the hallways while their mothers and fathers enjoyed their 'alf and 'alf. I stepped to light a cigarette in front of the place and, while doing so, I heard a lady say in quite an aristocratic tone of voice, to a lady a little her senior:

"Yes, indeed, I do know him," the elder lady answered.

"Well, 'ow long 'ave you been knowing 'im?" the young lady asked.

"Ah, it's a long time," the elderly lady answered, following up with a question to the young lady, "'ow long 'ave YOU been knowing Derek?"

"Ah, I've been knowing 'im since school days," the young lady said.

"You don't say! Well, would you believe it when I tell you that I've been knowing 'im before that? Do you know 'is mother put 'im in my baby carriage when she went out on business?" the senior lady said.

"I don't believe it! My boy never associated with the likes of you," the young lady said.

"Why that's an insult. You've insulted me! Don't think because I am drinking beer 'ere in a lowly pub, I didn't come from the 'igher class! You 'ave insulted me," the old lady said.

"That's a challenge! I'll show my

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