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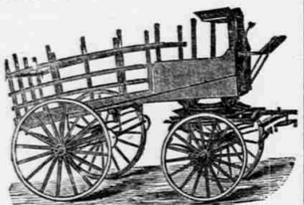
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THE CRUCIFIXION OF PHILIP STRONG.

By REV. CHARLES M. SHELDON,
Author of "In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?" "Malcom Kirk," "Robert Hardy's Seven Days," Etc.

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nessy. It was the personification of the church confronting the laboring man, each in a certain way asking the other, "What will the church do?" And it was a noticeable fact that the minister's look revealed more doubt and anxiety than the other man's look, which contained more or less of indifference and distrust. Phillip sighed, and his visitor soon after took his leave.

So it came about that Phillip Strong plunged into a work which from the time he stepped into the dingy little hall and faced the crowd peculiar to it had a growing influence on all his strange career, grew in strangeness rapidly as days came on.

He was invited again and again to address the men in that part of Milton. They were almost all of them mill employees. They had a simple organization for debate and discussion of questions of the day. Gradually the crowds increased as Phillip continued to come and developed a series of talks on Christian socialism. There was standing room only. He was beginning to know a number of the men, and a strong affection was growing up in their hearts for him.

That was just before the time the trouble at the mills broke out. He had just come back from the hall where he had now been going every Thursday evening and where he had spoken on his favorite theme—"The Meaning and Responsibility of Power, Both Financial and Mental." He had treated the subject from the Christian point of view entirely. He had several times roused his rude audience to enthusiasm. Moved by his theme and his surroundings, he had denounced, with even more than usual vigor, those men of ease and wealth who did nothing with their money to help their brothers. He had mentioned, as he went along, what great responsibility any great power puts on a man and had dealt in a broad way with the whole subject of power in men as a thing to be used and always used for the common good.

He did not recall his exact statements, but felt a little uneasy as he walked home, for fear he might possibly have influenced his particular audience against the rich as a class. He had not intended anything of the kind, but had a vague idea that possibly he ought to have guarded some words or sentences more carefully.

He had gone up into his study to finish some work when the bell rang sharply, and he came down to open the door just as Mrs. Strong came in from the other room, where she had been giving directions to the girl, who had gone up stairs through the kitchen.

The minister and his wife opened the door together, and one of the neighbors rushed into the hall so excited he could hardly speak.

"Oh, Mr. Strong, won't you go right down to Mr. Winter's house? You have more influence with those men than any one around here."

"What men?"

"The men who are going to kill him if some one doesn't stop it!"

"What?" cried Phillip, turning pale, not from fear, but from self reproach, to think he might have made a mistake. "Who is trying to kill him—the mill men?"

"Yes! No! I do not, cannot tell. But he is in great danger, and you are the only man in this town who can help to save him. Come!"

Phillip turned to his wife. "Sarah, it is my duty. If anything should happen to me, you know my soul will meet yours at the gates of paradise."

He kissed her and rushed out into the night.

CHAPTER IX.

When Phillip reached the residence of Mr. Winter, he found himself at once in the midst of a mob of howling, angry men, who surged over the lawn and tramped the light snow that was falling into a muddy mass over the walks and up the veranda steps. A large electric lamp out in the street in front of the house threw a light over the strange scene.

Phillip wedged his way in among the men, crying out his name and asking for room to be made so that he could see Mr. Winter. The crowd, under the impulse which sometimes moves excited bodies of men, yielded to his request. There were cries of "Let him have a minister if he wants one!" "Room here for the priest!" "Give the preacher a chance to do some praying where it's needed mighty bad!" and so on. Phillip found a way opened for him as he struggled toward the house, and he hurried forward, fearing some great trouble, but hardly prepared for what he saw when he finally reached the steps of the veranda.

Half a dozen men had the mill owner in their grasp, having evidently dragged him out of his dining room. His coat was half torn off, as if there had been a struggle. Marks of bloody fingers stained his collar. His face was white, and his eyes filled with the fear of death. Within, upon the floor, lay his wife, who had fainted. A son and a daughter, his two grown up children, clung terrified to one of the servants, who knelt half fainting herself by the side of the mill owner's wife. A table overturned and fragments of a late dinner scattered over the sideboard and on the floor, a broken plate, the print of a muddy foot on the white

tilling before the open fire—the whole picture flashed upon Phillip like a scene out of the French revolution, and he almost rubbed his eyes to know if he was awake and in America in the nineteenth century. He was intensely practical, however, and the nature of his duty never for a moment escaped him. He at once advanced and said calmly:

"What does all this mean? Why this attack on Mr. Winter?"

The moment Mr. Winter saw Phillip and heard his voice he cried out, trembling: "Is that you, Mr. Strong? Thank God! Save me! They are going to kill me!"

"Who talks of killing or taking human life contrary to law?" exclaimed Phillip, coming up closer and placing his hand on Mr. Winter's arm. "Men, what are you doing?"

For a moment the crowd fell back a little from the mill owner, and one of the men who had been foremost in the attack replied with some respect, although in a sullen manner: "Mr. Strong, this is not a case for your interference. This man has caused the death of one of his employees, and he deserves hanging!"

"And hanging he will get!" yelled another. A great cry arose. In the midst of it all Mr. Winter shrieked out his innocence. "It is all a mistake! They do not know! Mr. Strong, tell them they do not know!"

The crowd closed around Mr. Winter again. Phillip knew enough about men to know that the mill owner was in genuine danger. Most of his assailants were the foreign element in the mills. Many of them were under the influence of liquor. The situation was critical. Mr. Winter clung to Phillip with the frantic clutch of a man who sees only one way of escape and clings to that with mad eagerness. Phillip turned around and faced the mob. He raised his voice, hoping to gain a hearing and reason with it, but he might as well have raised his voice against a tornado. Some one threw a handful of mud and snow toward the prisoner. In an instant every hand reached for the nearest missile, and a shower of stones, muddy snowballs and limbs torn from the trees on the lawn was rained upon the house. Most of the windows in the lower story were broken. All this time Phillip was eagerly remonstrating with the few men who had their hands on Mr. Winter. He thought if he could only plead with them to let the man go he could slip with him around the end of the veranda through a side door and take him through the house to a place of safety. He also knew that every minute was precious, as the police might arrive at any moment and change the situation.

But in spite of his pleas the mill owner was gradually pushed and dragged down off the veranda toward the gate. The men tried to get Phillip out of the way.

"We don't want to harm you, sir. Better get out of danger," said the same man who had spoken before.

Phillip for answer threw one arm about Mr. Winter, saying: "If you kill him, you will kill me with him. You shall never do this great sin against an innocent man. In the name of God, I call on every soul here to—"

But his words were drowned in the noise that followed. The mob was insane with fury. Twice Mr. Winter was dragged off his feet by those down on the walk; twice Phillip raised him



"If you kill him, you will kill me."

to his feet, feeling sure that if the crowd once threw him down they would trample him to death. Once some one threw a rope over the wretched man's head. Both he and Mr. Winter were struck again and again. Their clothes were torn into tatters. Mr. Winter was faint and reeling. Only his great terror made his clutch on Phillip like that of a drowning man.

At last the crowd had dragged the two outside the gate into the street. Here they paused awhile, and Phillip again spoke to the mob.

"Men, made in God's image, listen to me! Do not take innocent life. If you kill him, you kill me also, for I will never leave his side alive, and I will not permit such murder if I can prevent it."

"Kill them both—the bloody coward and the priest!" yelled a voice. "They both belong to the same church."

"Yes, hang 'em! Hang 'em both!" A tempest of cries went up. Phillip towered up like a giant. In the light of the street lamp he looked out over the great sea of unexcitable, brutal faces

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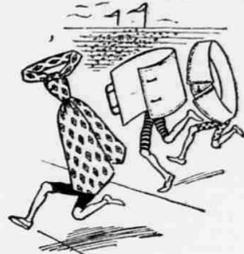
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