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THE CRUCIFIXION OF PHILIP STRONG.

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

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short terms. But the mill owner, probably fearing revenge on the part of the men, did not push the matter, and most of the cases went by default for lack of prosecution.

Mr. Winter's manner toward Philip underwent a change after that memorable evening when the minister stood by him at the peril of his own life. There was a feeling of genuine respect, mingled with fear, in his deportment toward Philip. To say that they were warm friends would be saying too much. Men as widely different as the minister and the wealthy mill man do not come together on that sacred ground of friendship, even when one is indebted to the other for his life. A man may save another from hanging and still be unable to save him from selfishness. And Mr. Winter went his way and Philip went his on a different basis, so far as common greeting went, but no nearer in the real thing, which makes heart to heart communion impossible. For the time being Mr. Winter's hostility was submerged under his indebtedness to Philip. He returned to his own place in the church and contributed to the financial support.

CHAPTER X.

One day at the close of a month Philip came into the cozy parsonage, and instead of going right up to his study, as his habit was when his outside work was done for the day, he threw himself down on a couch by the open fire. His wife was at work in the other room, but she came in, and, seeing him lying there, inquired what was the matter.

"Nothing, Sarah, with me. Only I'm sick at heart with the sight and knowledge of all this wicked town's sin and misery."

"Do you have to carry it all on your shoulders, Philip?"

"Yes," replied Philip almost fiercely. "It was not that either. Only his reply was like a great sob of conviction that he must bear something of these burdens. He could not help it."

Mrs. Strong did not say anything for a moment. Then she asked:

"Don't you think you take it too seriously, Philip?"

"What?"

"Other people's wrongs. You are not responsible."

"Am I not? I am my brother's keeper. What quantity of guilt may I not carry into the eternal kingdom if I do not do what I can to save him! Oh, how can men be so selfish? Yet I am only one person. I cannot prevent all this suffering alone."

"Of course you cannot, Philip. You wrong yourself to take yourself to task so severely for the sins of others. But what has stirred you up so this time?" Mrs. Strong understood Philip well enough to know that some particular case had roused his feeling. He seldom yielded to such despondency without some immediate practical reason.

Philip sat up on the couch and clasped his hands over his knee with the eager earnestness that characterized him when he was roused.

"Sarah, this town slumbers on the smoking crest of a volcano. There are more than 15,000 people here in Milton out of work. A great many of them are honest, temperate people who have saved up a little. But it is nearly gone. The mills are shut down and, on the authority of men that ought to know, shut down for all winter. The same condition of affairs is true in a more or less degree in the entire state and throughout the country and even the world. People are suffering today in this town for food and clothing and yet through no fault of their own. The same thing is true of thousands and even hundreds of thousands all over the world. It is an age that calls for heroes, martyrs, servants, saviors. And right here in this town, where distress walks the streets and actual want already has its clutch on many a poor devil, society goes on giving its expensive parties and living in its little room of selfish pleasure just as if the volcano was a downy little bed of roses for it to go to sleep in whenever it wears of the pleasure and wishes to retire to happy dreams. Oh, but the bubble will burst one of these days, and then—"

Philip swept his hand upward with a fine gesture and sank back upon the couch, groaning.

"Don't you exaggerate?" The minister's wife put the question gently.

"Not a bit! Not a bit! All true. I am not one of the French revolution fellows, always lugging in blood and destruction and prophesying ruin to the nation and the world if it doesn't see and hew the way I like it to. But I tell you, Sarah, it takes no prophet to see that a man who is hungry and out of work is a dangerous man to have around. And it takes no extraordinary sized heart to swell a little with righteous wrath when in such times as these people go right on with their useless luxuries of living and spend as much on a single evening's entertainment as would provide a comfortable living for a whole month to some deserving family."

"How do you know they do?"

"Well, I'll tell you. I've figured it out. I will leave it to any one of good judgment that any one of these projected parties mentioned here in the evening

paper"—Philip smoothed the paper on the head of the couch—"any one of them will cost in the neighborhood of \$100 to \$150. Look here! Here's the Goldens' party—members of Calvary church. They will spend at least \$25 to \$30 in flowers, and refreshments will cost \$50 more, and music another \$25 and incidentals \$25 extra, and so on. Is that right, Sarah, these times, and as people ought to live now?"

"But some one gets the benefit of all this money spent. Surely that is a help to some of the working people."

"Yes, but how many people are helped by such expenditures? Only a select few, and they are the very ones who are least in need of it. I say that Christian people and members of churches have no right to indulge their selfish pleasures to this extent in these ways. I know that Christ would not approve of it."

"You think he would not, Philip?"

"No, I know he would not. There is not a particle of doubt in my mind about it. What right has a disciple of Jesus Christ to spend for the gratification of his physical aesthetic pleasures money which ought to be feeding the hungry bodies of men or providing some useful necessary labor for their activity? I mean, of course, the gratification of those senses which a man can live without. In this age of the world society ought to dispense with some of its accustomed pleasures and deny itself for the sake of the great suffering, needy world. Instead of that, the members of the very church of Christ on earth spend more in a single evening's entertainment for people who don't need it than they give to the salvation of men in a whole year. I protest out of the soul that God gave me against such wicked selfishness. And I will protest if society spurn me from it as a bigot, a Puritan and a boor. For society in Christian America is not Christian in this matter—no, not after the Christianity of Christ!"

"What can you do about it, Philip?" His wife asked the question sadly. She had grown old fast since coming to Milton, and a presentiment of evil would, in spite of her naturally cheery disposition, cling to her whenever she considered Philip and his work.

"I can preach on it, and I will."

"Be wise, Philip. You tread on difficult ground when you enter society's realm."

"Well, dear, I will be as wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove, although I must confess I never knew

"I can preach on it, and I will."

just exactly how much that verse meant. But preach on it I must and will."

And when the first Sunday of the month came Philip did preach on it, to the dismay of several members of his church who were in the habit of giving entertainments and card parties on a somewhat elaborate scale.

He had never preached on the subject of amusements, and he stated that he wished it to be plainly understood that he was not preaching on the subject now. It was a question which went deeper than that and took hold of the very first principles of human society. A single passage in the sermon will show the drift of it all:

"We have reached a time in the history of the world when it is the Christian duty of every man who calls himself a disciple of the Master to live on a simpler, less extravagant basis. The world has been living beyond its means. Modern civilization has been exorbitant in its demands, and every dollar foolishly spent today means suffering for some one who ought to be relieved by that money wisely expended. An entertainment given by people of means to other people of means in these hard times, in which money is lavished on flowers, food and dress, is, in my opinion, an act of which Christ would not approve. I do not mean to say that he would object to the pleasure which flowers, food and dress will give, but he would say that it is an unnecessary enjoyment and expense at this particular crisis through which we are passing. He would say that money and time should be given where people more in need of them might have the benefit. He would say that when a town is in the situation of ours today it is not a time for any selfish use for any material blessing."

"Unless I mistake the spirit of the modern Christ, if he were here he would preach to the whole world the necessity of a far simpler, less expensive style of living, and, above all, ac-



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