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ROBERT HARDY'S SEVEN DAYS

A DREAM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.
By Rev. CHARLES M. SHELDON.
Author of "In His Steps," "The Crucifixion of Philip Strong," "Malcum Kirk," Etc.

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(CONTINUED.)

CHAPTER V.

Mr. Hardy was a man of great will power, but this scene with his drunken son crushed him for a moment and seemed to take the very soul out of him. Mrs. Hardy at first uttered a wild cry and then ran forward and, seizing her elder boy, almost dragged him into the house, while Mr. Hardy, recovering from his first shock, looked sternly at the companions of the boy and then shut the door. That night was a night of sorrow in that family. The sorrow of death is not to be compared with it.

But morning came, as it comes alike to the condemned criminal and to the pure hearted child on a holiday, and after a brief and troubled rest Mr. Hardy awoke to his second day, the memory of the night coming to him at first as an ugly dream, but afterward as a terrible reality. His boy drunk! He could not make it seem possible. Yet there in the next room he lay in a drunken stupor, sleeping off the effects of his delirium of the night before. Mr. Hardy fell on his knees and prayed for mercy, again repeating the words, "Almighty God, help me to use the remaining days in the wisest and best manner." Then calming himself by a tremendous effort he rose up and faced the day's work as bravely as any man under such circumstances could.

After a family council, in which all of them were drawn nearer together than they ever had been before on account of their troubles, Mr. Hardy outlined the day's work something as follows:

First, he would go and see James Caxton and talk over the affair with him and Clara. Then he would go down to the office and arrange some necessary details of his business. If possible, he would come home to lunch. In the afternoon he would go to poor Scoville's funeral, which had been arranged for 2 o'clock. Mrs. Hardy announced her intention to go also. Then Mr. Hardy thought he would have a visit with George and spend the evening at home arranging matters with reference to his own death. With this programme in mind he finally went away after an affectionate leave taking with his wife and children.

George slept heavily until the middle of the forenoon and then awoke with a raging headache. Bess had several times during the morning stolen into the room to see if her brother were awake. When he did finally turn over and open his eyes, he saw the young girl standing by the bedside. He groaned as he recalled the night and his mother's look, and Bess said timidly as she laid her hand on his forehead:

"George, I'm so sorry for you! Don't you feel well?"

"I feel as if my head would split open. It aches as if some one was chopping wood inside of it."

"What makes you feel so?" asked Bess innocently. "Did you eat too much supper at the Bramleys?"

Bess had never seen any one drunk before, and when George was helped to bed the night before by his father and mother she did not understand his condition. She had always adored her big brother. It was not strange she had no idea of his habits.

George looked at his small sister curiously; then, under an impulse he could not explain, he drew her nearer to him and said:

"Bess, I'm a bad fellow. I was drunk last night! Drunk—do you understand? And I've nearly killed mother!"

Bess was aghast at the confession. She put out her hand again.

"Oh, no, George!" Then with a swift reversion of feeling she drew back and said, "How could you, with father feeling as he does?"

And little Bess, who was a creature of very impulsive emotions, sat down crying on what she supposed was a cushion, but which was George's tall hat, accidentally covered with one end of a comforter which had slipped off the bed. Bess was a very plump little creature, and as she poked herself up and held up the hat George angrily exclaimed:

"You're always smashing my things!"

But the next minute he was sorry for the words.

Bess retreated toward the door, quivering under the injustice of the charge. At the door she halted. She had something of Clara's passionate temper, and once in awhile she let even her adored brother George feel it, small as she was.

"George Hardy, if you think more of your old stovepipe hat than you do of your sister, all right. You'll never get any more of my month's allowance. And if I do smash your things I don't come home drunk at night and break mother's heart. That's what she's crying about this morning—that and father's queer ways. Oh, dear, I don't want to live; life is so full of trouble!"

And little 12-year-old Bess sobbed in genuine sorrow.

George forgot his headache a minute. "Come, Bess, come and kiss and make up. Honest, now, I didn't mean it. I was bad to say what I did. I'll buy a dozen hats and let you sit on them for fun. Don't go away angry. I'm so miserable."

He lay down and groaned, and Bess went to him immediately, all her anger vanished.

drive away your headache, and I bring you up something nice to eat! Mother had Nora save something for you. Didn't you, mother?"

Bessie asked the question just as her mother came in.

Mrs. Hardy said "Yes" and, going up to George, sat down by him and laid her hand on his head, as his sister had done.

The boy moved uneasily. He saw the marks of great suffering on his mother's face, but he said nothing to express sorrow for his disgrace.

"Bess, will you go and get George his breakfast?" asked Mrs. Hardy, and the minute she was gone the mother turned to her son and said:

"George, do you love me?"

George had been expecting something different. He looked at his mother as the tears fell over her face, and all that was still good in him rose up in rebellion against the animal part. He seized his mother's hand and carried it to his lips, kissed it reverently and went out in a low tone:

"Mother, I am unworthy. If you knew"—

He checked himself as if on the verge of confession. His mother waited anxiously and then asked:

"Won't you tell me all?"

"No; I can't."

George shuddered, and at that moment Bess came in bearing a tray with toast and eggs and coffee. Mrs. Hardy left Bess to look after her brother and went out of the room almost abruptly. George looked ashamed and after eating a little told Bess to take the things away. She looked grieved, and he said:

"Can't help it. I'm not hungry. Besides, I don't deserve all this attention. Say, Bess, is father still acting under his impression, or dream, or whatever it was?"

"Yes; he is," replied Bess with much seriousness, "and he is ever so good now and kisses mother and all of us goodby in the morning, and he is kind and ever so good. I don't believe he is in his right mind. Will said yesterday he thought father was non campus mentit us, and then he wouldn't tell me what it meant, but I guess he doesn't think father is just right intellectually."

Now and then Bess got hold of a big word and used it a great deal. She said "Intellectually" over twice, and George laughed a little, but it was a bitter laugh, not such as a boy of his age has any business to possess. He lay down and appeared to be thinking and after awhile said aloud:

"I wonder if he wouldn't let me have some money while he's feeling that way?"

"Who?" queried Bess. "Father?"

"What! You here still, Curiosity? Better take these things down stairs."

George spoke with his "headache tone," as Clara called it, and Bess without reply gathered up the tray things and went out, while George continued to figure out in his hardy yet sober brain the possibility of his father letting him have more money with which to gamble, and yet in the very next room Mrs. Hardy knelt in an agony of petition for that firstborn, crying out of her heart:

"O God, it is more than I can bear! To see him growing away from me so! Dear Lord, be thou merciful to me. Bring him back again to the life he used to live! How proud I was of him! What a joy he was to me! And now, and now! O gracious Father, if thou art truly compassionate, hear me! Has not this foul demon of drink done harm enough? That it should still come into my home! Ah, but I have been indifferent to the cries of other women, but now it strikes me! Spare me, great and powerful Almighty! My boy! My heart's hunger is for him! I would rather see him dead than see him as I saw him last night. Spare me! Spare me. O God!"

Thus the mother prayed, dry eyed and almost despairing, while he for whom she prayed that heartbroken prayer calculated, with growing coldness of mind, the chances of getting more money from his father to use in drink and at the gaming table.

O appetite, and thou spirit of gambling! Ye are twin demons with whom many a fair browed young soul today is marching arm in arm down the dread pavement of hell's vestibule, lined with grinning skeletons of past victims, and yet men gravely discuss the probability of evil and think there is no special danger in a little speculation now and then.

Parents say, "Oh, my boy wouldn't do such a thing!" But how many know really and truly what their boy is really doing, and how many of the young men would dare reveal to their mothers or fathers the places where they have been and the amusements they have tasted and the things for which they have spent their money?

Mr. Hardy went at once to his neighbors, the Caxtons, who lived only a block away. He had not been on speaking terms with the family for some time, and he dreaded the interview with the sensitive dread of a very proud and stern-willed man. But two days had made a great change in him. He was a new man in Christ Jesus, and as he rang the bell he prayed for wisdom and humility.

James himself came to the door with his overcoat on and hat in hand, evidently just ready to go down town. He started back at seeing Mr. Hardy.

"Are you going down town? I will not come in then, but walk along with you," said Mr. Hardy quietly.

So James came out, and the two walked along together. There was an awkward pause for a minute; then Mr. Hardy said:

"James, is it true that you and Clara are engaged?"

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"I have used Dr. Miles' Pain Pills for seven years and think there is nothing like them. They never fail to give relief from headache, and since I have been using them the attacks from that trouble have been less frequent and less severe, and I feel like my real self once more."

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tone. "We would like to be, with your consent, sir."

Mr. Hardy walked on thoughtfully and then glanced at the young man at his side. He was 6 feet tall, not very handsome, as Bessie had frankly said, but he had a good face, a steady, clear blue eye and resolute air, as of one who was willing to work hard to get what he wanted. Mr. Hardy could not help contrasting him with his own prematurely broken down son George, and he groaned inwardly as he thought of the foolish pride that would bar the doors of his family to a young man like James Caxton simply because he was poor and because his father had won in a contested election in which the two older men were candidates for the same office.

It did not take long to think all this. Then he said, looking again at the young man with a businesslike look:

"Supposing you had my permission, what are your prospects for support?"



"James, is it true that you and Clara are engaged?"

"No, sir; I don't think I am what would be called a Christian. As for living as if every day were to be my last—do you think that is possible, sir?"

Mr. Hardy did not answer. He walked along thoughtfully. In the course of the conversation they had reached the corner where the young man turned down to his office, and the two paused.

"I want to have another talk with you," Mr. Hardy said. "Today is Tuesday; say tomorrow evening. I want to see your father also, and"—

Mr. Hardy was on the point of saying that he wanted to ask the elder Caxton's forgiveness, but for some reason he stopped without doing so.

James exclaimed eagerly as Mr. Hardy turned to go:

"Then you don't forbid my entertaining some hope of your good will in the matter of my love for Clara?" He lowered his voice and spoke very strongly.

"You don't forget your own youth and the way in which you yourself began your home?"

Mr. Hardy answered never a word to this appeal, but looked into the young man's face with a gaze he did not forget all day, then wrung his hand and turned on his heel abruptly and walked rapidly down the street.

The reply was almost stern.

Mrs. Caxton's younger brother had been ruined by gambling. He had come to the house one night, and in a fit of anger because his sister would not give him money to carry on his speculation he had threatened her life. James had interposed and at the risk of his own life had probably saved his mother's. Mrs. Caxton had been so unnerved by the scene that her health had suffered from it seriously. All this had happened when James was growing out of boyhood. But not a day had passed that the young man did not see a sad result of that great gambling passion in his own mother's face and bearing. He loathed the thought of a vice so debasing that it ignored all the tender ties of kindred and was ready to stop at nothing in order to get means for its exercise.

Mr. Hardy knew the story, and he exclaimed: "Forgive me, James. I did not think." Then, after a pause: "Are you a Christian? I mean do you have a faith in the revelation of God to men through Jesus Christ, and do you try to live according to his teachings, with a supreme love for God controlling life? Do you live every day as if it might be the last you would have to live?"

James started. Was Mr. Hardy out of his mind? He had never heard him talk like this before. The idea of Mr. Hardy caring about his religious character in the event of his becoming a son-in-law was an idea too remote for occurrence. He could see, however, that some very powerful change had taken place in Mr. Hardy's usual demeanor. His words also produced a strong effect upon the young man. He was like thousands of young men—temperate, honest, industrious, free from vices, strictly moral, but without any decided religious faith.

"Am I a Christian?" he asked himself, echoing Mr. Hardy's question. No; he could not say that he was. He had never said so to any one. He had, in fact, never been confronted with the question before. So he replied to Mr. Hardy:

"No, sir; I don't think I am what would be called a Christian. As for living as if every day were to be my last—do you think that is possible, sir?"

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James looked after him as he disappeared among the crowds of people going to their business, and then turned to his own tasks. But something in him gave him hope. Another something appealed all day to his inner nature, and he could not shake off the impression of Mr. Hardy's question, "Are you a Christian?" And even when he went home at night that question pursued him more strenuously than any other and would not give him peace.

CHAPTER VI.

Robert Hardy reached his office just in time to see Burns, the foreman, go out of a side door and cross the yard. The manager followed him and entered the machine shop in time to see him stop at a machine at the farthest end of the shop and speak to the man at work there. The man was a Norwe-

gian, Herman by name. He was running what is called a planer, a machine for trimming pieces of cold metal just from the foundry or the casting room. He was at work this morning on one of the eccentric bars of a locomotive, and it was of such a character that he could leave the machine for several minutes to do the planing.

Burns talked with this man for awhile and then moved across the floor to the other workman, a small boned, nervous little fellow, who was in charge of a boring machine which drove a steel drill through heavy plates of iron fastened into the frame.

Mr. Hardy came up just as Burns turned away from this man and touched him on the shoulder. The foreman started and turned about, surprised to see the manager.

"Well, Burns, how goes everything this morning?" asked Robert.

"The men here are grumbling because they don't have a holiday same as the men in Scoville's department."

"But we can't shut down the whole business, can we?" asked Mr. Hardy, with a momentary touch of his old time feeling. "The men are unreasonable."

"I'm afraid there'll be trouble, sir. I can feel it in the air," replied Burns.

Mr. Hardy made no reply in words, but looked at him. Within the blackened area of the great shop about 200 men were at work. The whirl of machinery was constant. The grind of steel on iron was blended with the rattle of chains and the rolling of the metal carriages in their tracks. The Genius of Railroadmaking seemed present in the grim strength and rapidity of several machines which moved almost as if instinct with intelligence and played with the most unyielding substances as if they were soft and pliable clay. In the midst of all this smashing of matter against itself, through the smoke and din and dust and revolution of the place, Mr. Hardy was more than usually alive this morning to the human aspect of the case. His mind easily went back to the time when he himself stood at one of these planers and did just such work as that big Norwegian was doing, only the machines were vastly better and improved now. Mr. Hardy was not ashamed of having come along through the ranks of manual labor. In fact, he always spoke with pride of the work he used to do in that very shop, and he considered himself able to run all by himself any piece of machinery in the shops, but

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Kidney trouble preys upon the mind, discourages and lessens ambition; beauty, vigor and cheerfulness soon disappear when the kidneys are out of order or diseased.



Kidney trouble has become so prevalent that it is not uncommon for a child to be born afflicted with weak kidneys. If the child urinates too often, if the urine scalds the flesh or if, when the child reaches an age when it should be able to control the passage, it is yet afflicted with bed-wetting, depend upon it, the cause of these difficulties is kidney trouble, and the first step should be towards the treatment of these important organs. This unpleasant trouble is due to a diseased condition of the kidneys and bladder and not to a habit as most people suppose.

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