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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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**CHAPTER I.**

Philip Strong could not decide what was best to do. The postman that evening had brought him two letters, and he had just finished reading them. He sat with his hands clasped over his knee, leaning back in his chair and looking out through his study window. He was evidently thinking very hard, and the two letters were the cause of it.

Finally he rose, went to his study floor and called down the stairs: "Sarah, I wish you would come up here. I want your help."  
"All right, Phillip, I'll be up in a minute," responded a voice from below, and very soon the minister's wife came up stairs into her husband's study.  
"What's the matter?" she said as she came into the room. "It must be something very serious, for you don't call me up here unless you are in great distress. You remember the last time you called me, you had shut the tassel of your dressing gown under the lid of your writing desk, and I had to cut you loose. You aren't fast anywhere now, are you?"  
Phillip smiled quaintly. "Yes, I am. I'm in a strait betwixt two. Let me read these letters, and you will see."  
So he began at once, and we will copy the letters, omitting dates:

CALVARY CHURCH, MILTON.  
Rev. Phillip Strong:  
Dear Sir—At a meeting of the Milton Calvary church, held last week, it was voted unanimously to extend you a call to become pastor of this church at a salary of \$2,000 a year. We trust that you will find it in accordance with the will of the Head of the church to accept this decision on the part of Calvary church and become its pastor. The church is in good condition and has the hearty support of most of the leading families in the town. It is the strongest in membership and financially of the seven principal churches here. We await your reply, confidently hoping you will decide to come to us. We have been without a settled pastor now for nearly a year, since the death of Dr. Brown, and we have united upon you as the person most eminently fitted to fill the pulpit of Calvary church. The grace of our Lord be with you. In behalf of the church,  
**WILLIAM WELLS,**  
Chairman of the Board of Trustees.  
"What do you think of that, Sarah?" asked Phillip Strong, as he finished the letter.  
"Two thousand dollars is twice as much as you are getting now, Phillip."  
"What, you mercenary little creature, do you think of the salary first?"  
"If I did not think of it once in a while, I doubt if you would have a de-



**REV. CHARLES M. SHELDON.**  
cent meal or a good suit of clothes," replied the minister's wife, looking at him with a smile.  
"Oh, well, that may be, Sarah. But let me read you the other letter," he went on without discussing the salary matter:

CHELSEA HILL CHURCH, ELMDALE.  
Rev. Phillip Strong:  
Dear Brother—At a meeting of the Elmdale Chapel Hill church, held last week Thursday, it was unanimously voted to extend you a call to become pastor of the church at a salary of \$2,000 a year, with two months' vacation, to be selected at your own convenience. The Chapel Hill church is in a prosperous condition, and many of the members recall your career in the college with much pleasure. This is an especially strong center for church work, the proximity of the boys' academy and the university making the situation one of great power to a man who thoroughly understands and enjoys young men, as we know you do. We most earnestly hope you will consider this call not as purely formal, but as from the hearts of the people. We are, very cordially yours, in behalf of the church,  
**PROFESSOR WELLMAN,**  
Chairman of the Board of Trustees.  
"What do you think of that?" asked the minister again.  
"The salary is just the same, isn't it?"  
"Now, Sarah," said the minister, "if I didn't know what a generous, unselfish heart you really have, I should get very vexed at you for talking about the salary as if that was the most important thing."  
"The salary is very important, though. But you know, Phillip, I would be as willing as you are to live on no salary if the grocer and butcher would continue to feed us for nothing. I wish from the bottom of my heart that we could live without money."  
"It is a bother, isn't it?" replied Phillip, so gravely that his wife laughed heartily at his tone.  
"Well, the question is, what to do with the letters," resumed the minister.  
"Which of the two churches do you prefer?" asked his wife.  
"I would rather go to the Chapel Hill church as my preference is concerned."  
"Then why not accept their call, if that is the way you feel?"  
"Because, while I should like to go to Elmdale, I feel as if I ought to go to Milton."

Phillip Strong, with a smile and a sigh, took up his pen and wrote replies to the calls he had received, refusing the call to Elmdale and accepting the one to Milton. And so the strange story of a great hearted man really began.

When he had finished writing these two letters, he wrote another, which throws so much light on his character and his purpose in going to Milton that we will insert that in this story as being necessary to its full understanding. This is the letter:

My Dear Alfred—Two years ago, when we left the seminary, you remember we promised each other in case either of us left his present parish he would let the other know at once. I did not suppose when I came that I should leave so soon, but I have just written a letter which means the beginning of a new life to me. The Calvary church in Milton has given me a call, and I have accepted it. Two months ago my church here practically went out of existence through a union with the other church on the street. The history of that movement is too long for me to relate here, but since it took place I have been preaching as a supply, pending the final settlement of



"I am convinced that I must go to Milton."

affairs, and so I was at liberty to accept a call elsewhere. I must confess the call from Milton was a surprise to me. I have never been there (you know I do not believe in candidates for a place), and so I suppose their church committee came here to listen to me. Two years ago nothing would have induced me to go to Milton. Today it seems perfectly clear that the Lord says to me, "Go." You know my natural inclination is toward a quiet, scholarly pastorate. Well, Milton is, as you know, a noisy, dirty, manufacturing town, full of workmen, cursed with saloons and black with coal smoke and unwholesome humanity. The church is quite strong in membership. The "Year Book" gives it 500 members last year, and it is composed almost entirely of the leading families in the place. What I can do in such a church remains to be seen. My predecessor there, Dr. Brown, was a profound scholar and generally liked, I believe. He was a man of the old school and made no attempt, I understand, to bring the church into contact with the masses. You will say that such a church is a poor place in which to attempt a different work. I do not necessarily think so. The church of Christ is in itself, I believe, a powerful engine of reform against all evil. I have great faith in the membership of almost any church in this country to accomplish wonderful things for humanity, and I am going to Milton with that faith very strong in me. I feel as if a very great work could be done there. Think of it, Alfred! A town of 50,000 workmen, half of them foreigners; a town with more than 90 saloons in full view; a town where I have known the great denominations all situated on one street and that street the most fashionable in the place, a town where the police records show an amount of crime and depravity almost unparalleled in municipal annals—surely such a place presents an opportunity for the true church of Christ to do some splendid work. I hope I do not overestimate the needs of the place. I have known the general condition of things in Milton ever since you and I did our summer work in the neighboring town of Clifton. If ever there was missionary ground in America, it is there. I cannot understand just why the call comes to me to go to a place and take up work that in many ways is so distasteful to me. In one sense I shrank from it with a sensitiveness which no one except my wife and you could understand. You know what an almost ridiculous excess of sensibility I have. It seems sometimes impossible for me to do the work that the active ministry of this age demands of a man. I almost kill me to know that I am criticized for all that I say and do. And yet you and the ministry will always be the target for criticism. I have an almost morbid shrinking from the thought that people do not like me, that I am not loved by everybody, and yet I know that if I speak the truth in my preaching and speak it without regard to consequences someone is sure to become offended and in the end I know that I am doing what I ought to do. As so intense a craving for the love of his fellow men as I possess, and yet I am conscious that I cannot make myself understood by very many people. They will always say, "How cold and unapproachable he is!" when in reality I love them with yearnings of heart. Now, then, I am going to Milton with all this in my mind. You see, I am not, yet, dear child, there is not the least doubt after all that I ought to go. I hope that in the rush of the work there I shall be able to forget myself, and then the work will stand out prominent as it ought. With all my doubts of myself I never question the wisdom of entering the ministry. I have a very positive assurance as I work that I am doing what I ought to do. As what can a man ask more? I am not dissatisfied with the ministry, only with my own action within it. It is the noblest of all professions. I feel proud of it every day. Only it is so great that it makes a man feel small when he steps into it. Well, my wife is calling me down to tea. Let me know what you think. We shall move to Milton next week probably; so, if you write, direct there. As ever, your old chum,  
**PHILIP STRONG.**

It was characteristic of Philip that in this letter he said nothing about his call to Elmdale and did not tell his college chum what salary was offered him by the church at Milton. As a matter of fact, he really forgot all about everything, except the one important event of his decision to go to Milton. He regarded it, and rightly so, as the most serious step of his life, and while he had apparently decided the matter very quickly it was, in reality, the result of a deep conviction that he ought to go. He was in the habit of making his decisions rapidly. This habit sometimes led him into embarrassing mistakes and once in a great while resulted in humiliating reversals of opinion, so that people who did not know him thought he was fickle and changeable. In the present case Philip acted with his customary quickness and knew very well that his action was unalterable.

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"DEAR MRS. PINKHAM—I had been a constant sufferer for nearly three years. Had inflammation of the womb, leucorrhœa, heart trouble, bearing-down pains, backache, headache, ached all over, and at times could hardly stand on my feet. My heart trouble was so bad that some nights I was compelled to sit up in bed or get up and walk the floor, for it seemed as though I should smother. More than once I have been obliged to have the doctor visit me in the middle of the night. I was also very nervous and fretful. I was utterly discouraged. One day I thought I would write and see if you could do anything for me. I followed your advice and now I feel like a new woman. All those dreadful troubles I have no more, and I have found Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and Sanative Wash a sure cure for leucorrhœa. I am very thankful for your good advice and medicine."

**WOMEN WHO NEED MRS. PINKHAM'S AID**



L. E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and Sanative Wash a sure cure for leucorrhœa.

"Are you tired tonight, Phillip?" asked his wife.  
"Yes, the day has been rather trying. Did you think I was nervous? Did I preach well?" Phillip was not vain in the least. He simply put the question to satisfy his own exacting demand on himself in preaching. And there was not a person in the world to whom he would have put such a question except his wife.  
"No, I thought you did splendidly. I felt proud of you. You made some queer gestures, and once you put one of your hands in your pocket. But your sermons were both strong and effective. I am sure the people were impressed. It was very still at both services."  
Phillip was silent a moment. And his wife went on:  
"I am sure we shall like it here, Phillip. What do you think?"  
"I cannot tell yet. There is very much to do."  
"How do you like the church building?"  
"It is an easy audience room for my voice. I don't like the arrangement of the choir over the front door. I think the choir ought to be down on the platform in front of the people, by the side of the minister."  
"That's one of your hobbies, Phillip. But the singing was good, didn't you think so?"  
"Yes, the choir is a good one. The congregation didn't seem to sing much, and I believe in congregational singing, even when there is a choir. But we can bring that about in time, I think."  
"Now, Phillip," said his wife, in some alarm, "you are not going to meddle with the singing, are you? It will get you into trouble. There is a musical committee in the church, and such committees are very sensitive about any interference."  
"Well," said Phillip, rousing up a little, "the singing is a very important part of the service. And it seems to me I ought to have something important to say about it. But you need not fear, Sarah. I'm not going to try to change everything all at once."  
His wife looked at him a little anxiously. She had perfect faith in Phillip's honesty of purpose, but she sometimes had a fear of his impetuous desire to reform the world. After a little pause she spoke again, changing the subject.  
"What did you think of the congregation, Phillip?"  
"I enjoyed it. I thought it was very attentive. There was a larger number out this evening than I had expected."  
"Did you like the looks of the people?"  
"They were all very nicely dressed."  
"Now, Phillip, you know that isn't what I mean. Did you like the people's faces?"  
"You know I like all sorts and conditions of men."  
"Yes, but there are audiences and audiences. Do you think you will enjoy preaching to this one in Calvary church?"  
"I think I shall," replied Phillip, but he said it in a tone that might have meant a great deal more. Again there was silence and again the minister's wife was the first to break it.  
"There was a place in your sermon tonight, Phillip, where you appeared the least bit embarrassed, as you seem sometimes at home when you have some writing or some newspaper article on your mind and some one suddenly interrupts you with a question a good way from your thoughts. What was the matter? Did you forget a point?"  
"No, I'll tell you. From where I stand on the pulpit platform I can see through one of the windows over the front door. There is a large electric lamp burning outside, and the light fell directly on the sidewalk across the street. From time to time groups of people went through that band of light. Of course I could not see their faces very well, but I soon found out that they were mostly the young men

and women operatives of the mills. They were out strolling through the street, which, I am told, is a favorite promenade with them. I should think as many as 200 passed by the church while I was preaching. Well, after awhile I began to ask myself whether there was any possible way of getting those young people to come into the church instead of strolling past? And then I looked at the people in front of me and saw how different they were from those outside and wondered if it wouldn't be better to close up the church and go and preach on the street where the people are. And so, carrying on all that questioning with myself, while I tried to preach, causing a little 'embarrassment,' as you kindly call it, in the sermon."  
"I should think so! But how do you know, Phillip, that those people outside were in any need of your preaching?"  
Phillip appeared surprised at the question. He looked at his wife, and her face was serious.  
"Why, doesn't everybody need preaching? They may not stand in need of my preaching perhaps, but they ought to have some preaching. And I cannot help thinking of what is the duty of the church in this place to the great crowd outside. Something ought to be done."  
"Phillip, I am sure your work here will be blessed. Don't you think so?"  
"I know it will," replied Phillip, with the assurance of a very positive but spiritually minded man. He never thought his Master was honored by asking him for small things or doubting the power of Christianity to do great things.  
And always when he said "I" he simply meant, not Phillip Strong, but Christ in Phillip Strong. To deny the power and worth of that incarnation was, to his mind, not humility, but treason.  
The Sunday following Phillip made this announcement to the people:  
"Beginning with next Sunday morning, I shall give the first of a series of monthly talks on 'Christ and Modern Society.' It will be my object in these

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To suffer with skin disease that it is for a man, for a smooth skin and a clear complexion are essential elements of female beauty. When the taint of scrofula is in the blood it will be sure to show itself soon or late. Often its manifestations are as repulsive as they are painful. Many people have been cured of scrofula in its most malignant forms by the use of Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery. This remedy is remarkable for its power to purify the blood. It absolutely eliminates the corrupting elements. It makes the blood clean and rich. It increases the action of the blood-making glands, and so increases the quantity of pure blood supplied to the body.

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