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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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[CONTINUED.]

CHAPTER V.

As people waked up in Milton the Wednesday morning after the shooting of Philip Strong they grew conscious of the fact, as the news came to their knowledge, that they had been nursing for 50 years one of the most brutal and cowardly institutions on earth and heaving it to do the very thing which at last it had done. For the time being Milton suffered a genuine shock. Long pent up feeling against the whisky power burst out, and public sentiment for once condemned the source of the cowardly attempt to murder.

Various rumors were flying about. It was said that Mr. Strong had been stabbed in the back while out making parish calls in company with his wife and that she had been wounded by a pistol shot herself. It was also said that he had been shot through the heart and instantly killed. But all these confused reports were finally set at rest when those calling at the parsonage brought away the exact truth.

The first shot fired by the man from behind the tree struck Philip in the knee, but the ball glanced off. He felt the blow and staggered, but his next impulse was to rush in the direction of the sound and disarm his assailant. That was the reason he had leaped into the street. But the second shot was better aimed, and the bullet crashed into his upper arm and shoulder, shattering the bone and producing an exceedingly painful, though not fatal, wound.

The shock caused Philip to fall, and he fainted away, but not before the face of the man who had shot him was clearly stamped on his mind. He knew that he was one of the saloon proprietors whose establishment Philip had visited the week before. He was a man with a harelip, and there was no mistaking his countenance.

When the people of Milton learned that Philip was not fatally wounded, their excitement cooled a little. A wave of indignation, however, swept over the town when it was learned that the would be murderer was recognized by the minister, and it was rumored that he had openly threatened that he would "fix the cursed preacher so that he would not be able to preach again."

Philip, however, felt more full of fight against the rum devil than ever. As he lay on the bed the morning after the shooting he had nothing to regret or fear. The surgeon had been called at once, as soon as his wife and the alarmed neighbors had been able to carry him into the parsonage. The ball had been removed and the wounds dressed. By noon he had recovered somewhat from the effects of the operation and was resting, although very weak from the shock and suffering considerable pain.

"What is that stain on the floor, Sarah?" he asked as his wife came in with some article for his comfort. Philip lay where he could see into the other room.

"It is your blood, Philip," replied his wife, with a shudder. "It dripped like a stream from your shoulder as we carried you in last night. Oh, Philip, it is dreadful! It seems to me like an awful nightmare. Let us move away from this terrible place. You will be killed if we stay here."

"There isn't much danger if the rest of 'em are as poor shots as this fellow," replied Philip. "Now, little woman, he went on cheerfully, "don't worry. I don't believe they'll try it again."

Mrs. Strong controlled herself. She did not want to break down while Philip was in his present condition.

"You must not talk," she said as she smoothed his hair back from the pale forehead.

"That's pretty hard on a preacher, don't you think, Sarah? My occupation is gone if I can't talk."

"Then I'll talk for two. They say that most women can do that."

"Will you preach for me next Sunday?"

"What, and make myself a target for saloon keepers? No, thank you. I have half a mind to forbid you ever preaching again. It will be the death of you."

"It is the life of me, Sarah. I would not ask anything better than to die with the armor on, fighting evil. Well, all right. I won't talk any more. I suppose there's no objection to my thinking a little?"

"Thinking is the worst thing you can do. You just want to lie there and do nothing but get well."

"All right. I'll quit everything except eating and sleeping. Put up a little placard on the head of the bed saying: 'Biggest curiosity in Milton! A live minister who has stopped thinking and talking! Admission 10 cents! Proceeds to be devoted to teach saloon keepers how to shoot straight!'"

Philip was still somewhat under the influence of the doctor's anaesthetic, and as he faintly murmured this absurd sentence he fell into a slumber from which he awoke very feeble and realizing that he would be confined to the house some time, but feeling in good spirits and thankful out of the depths of his vigorous nature that he was still spared to do God's will on earth.

The next day he felt strong enough

loves his home and his country must speak out against it? And yet I love you. That is possible because you are human. Oh, my Father," Philip continued, changing his appeal to the man by an almost natural manner into a petition to the Infinite, "make this soul dear to thee, to behold thy love for him, and make him see that it is not against me, a mere man, that he has sinned, but against thyself—against the purity and holiness and affection! Oh, my God, thou who didst come in the likeness of sinful men to seek and save that which was lost, stretch out the arms of thy salvation now to this child and save him from himself, from his own disbelief, his hatred of me or of what I have said! Thou art all merciful and all loving. We leave all souls of men in the protecting, unfolding embrace of thy boundless compassion and infinite mercy."

There was a moment of entire quiet in the room, and then Philip said faintly: "Sarah, I cannot say more. Only tell the man I bear him no hatred and commend him to the love of God."

Mrs. Strong was alarmed at Philip's appearance. The scene had been too much for his strength. She hastily commanded the officer to take his prisoner away and with the help of her friend cared for the minister, who, after the first faintness, rallied and then gradually sank into sleep that proved more refreshing than any he had yet enjoyed since the night of the shooting.

The next day found Philip improving more rapidly than Mrs. Strong had thought possible. She forbade him the sight of all callers, however, and insisted that he must keep quiet. His wounds were healing satisfactorily, and when the surgeon called he expressed himself much pleased with his patient's appearance.

"Say, doctor, do you really think it would set me back any to think a little?"

"No. I never heard of thinking hurting people. I have generally considered it a healthy habit."

"The reason I asked," continued Philip gravely, "was because my wife absolutely forbade it, and I was wondering how long I could keep it up and fool anybody."

"That's a specimen of his stubbornness, doctor," said the minister's wife, smiling. "Why, only a few minutes before you came in he was insisting that he could preach tomorrow. Think of it, a man with a shattered shoulder, who would have to stand on one leg and do all his gesturing with his left hand; a man who can't preach without the use of seven or eight arms and as many pockets and has to walk up and down the platform like a lion when he gets started on his delivery! And yet he wants to preach tomorrow! He's that stubborn that I don't know that I can keep him at home. You would better leave some powders to put him to sleep, and we will keep him in a state of unconsciousness until Monday morning."

"Now, doctor, just listen to me awhile. Mrs. Strong is talking for two women, as she agreed to do, and that puts me in a hard position. But I want to know how soon I can get to work again."

"You will have to lie there a month," said the doctor bluntly.

"Impossible! I never led that time in my life!" said Philip soberly.

"It would serve him right to perform a surgical operation on him for that, wouldn't it, Mrs. Strong?" the surgeon appealed to her.

"I think he deserves the worst you can do, doctor."

"But say, dear people, I can't stay here a month. I must be about my Minister's business. What will the church do for supplies?"

"Don't worry, Philip. The church will take care of that."

But Philip was already eager to get to work. Only the assurance of the surgeon that he might possibly get out in a little over three weeks satisfied him. Sunday came and passed. Some one from a neighboring town who happened to be visiting in Milton occupied the pulpit, and Philip had a quiet, restful day. He started in the week determined to beat the doctor's time for recovery, and, having a remarkably strong constitution and a tremendous will, he bade fair to be limping about the house in two weeks. His shoulder would heal very fast. His knee bothered him, and it seemed likely that he would go lame for a long time. But he was not concerned about that if only he could go about in any sort of fashion once more.

Wednesday of that week he was surprised in an unexpected manner by an event which did more than anything else to hasten his recovery. He was still confined to bed down stairs when in the afternoon the bell rang, and Mrs. Strong went to the door, supposing it was one of the church people come to inquire about the minister. She found instead Alfred Burke, Philip's old college chum and seminary classmate. Mrs. Strong welcomed him heartily, and in answer to his eager inquiry concerning Philip's condition she brought him into the room, knowing her patient quite well and feeling sure the sight of his old chum would do him more good than harm. The first thing Alfred said was:

"Old man, I hardly expected to see you again this side of heaven. How does it happen that you are alive here after all the times the papers have had you killed?"

"Bad marksmanship principally. I used to think I was a big man. But after the shooting I came to the conclusion that I must be rather small."

"Your heart is so big it's a wonder to me that you weren't shot through it, no matter where you were hit. But I tell you it seems good to see you in the flesh once more."

"Why didn't you come and preach for me last Sunday?" asked Philip quizzically.

"Why, haven't you heard? I did not get news of the affair until last Sat-

[LETTER TO MRS. PINKHAM NO. 46,970]

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almost as large as the last one he had faced. And yet his appearance was a sermon in itself against the institution he had held up to public condemnation on that occasion. His knees would prove very stubborn, and he limped badly. That in itself spoke eloquently of the dastardly attempt on his life. His face was pale, and he had grown thin. His shoulder was stiff, and the enforced quietness of his delivery contrasted strangely with his customary fiery appearance on the platform. Altogether that first Sunday of his reappearance in his pulpit was a stronger sermon against the saloon than anything he could have spoken or written.

When the first Sunday in the next month came on, Philip was more like his old self. He had gathered strength enough to go around two Sunday afternoons and note for himself the desecration of the day as it went on recklessly. As he saw it all it seemed to him that the church in Milton was practically doing nothing to stop the evil. All the ministers complained of the difficulty of getting an evening congregation. Yet hundreds of young people walked past all the churches every Sunday night, bent on pleasure-going to the theaters or concerts of parties, which seemed to have no trouble in attracting the crowd. Especially was this true of the foreign population, the working element connected with the mills. It was a common occurrence for dog fights, cock fights and shooting matches of various kinds to be going on in the tenement district on Sunday, and the police seemed powerless or careless in the matter.

All this burned into Philip like molten metal, and when he faced his people on the Sunday which was becoming a noted Sunday for them he quivered with the earnestness and thrill which always come to a sensitive man when he feels sure he has a sermon which must be preached and a message which the people must hear for their lives.

He took for a text Christ's words: "The Sabbath was made for man," and at once defined its meaning as a special day.

"The true meaning of our modern Sunday may be summed up in two words—rest and worship. Under the head of rest may be gathered whatever is needful for the proper and healthful recuperation of one's physical and mental powers, always regarding not simply our own ease and comfort, but also the same right to rest of

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**A SORRY SIGHT**

It is, to see a strong man shaken like a reed by a paroxysm of coughing, which leaves him gasping for breath. People have suffered with bronchial affections for years, with obstinate, stubborn coughs, and growing weakness. They have tried doctors and medicines in vain. At last they have been induced to try Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery, with the general result experienced by all who put this wonderful medicine to the test—help at once, and a speedy cure.

For coughs, bronchial affections, weak lungs, spitting of blood, and other diseases of the organs of respiration, "Golden Medical Discovery" is practically a specific. It always helps; it almost always cures.

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"I hardly expected to see you again," said Mrs. Strong.

"I don't know about that. I'm not doing any thinking lately. But now, as we're going to be only 50 miles apart, what's to hinder an exchange once in awhile?"

"I'm agreeable to that," replied Philip's chum; "on condition, however, that you furnish me with a gun and pay all surgeon's bills when I occupy your pulpit."

"Done," said Philip, with a grin. And just then Mrs. Strong forbade any more talk. Alfred staid until the evening train, and when he left he stooped down and kissed Philip's cheek. "It's a custom we learned when in the German universities together that summer after college, you know," he explained, with the slightest possible blush, when Mrs. Strong came in and caught him in the act. It seemed to her, however, like an affecting thing that two big, grown up men like her husband and his old chum showed such tender affection for each other. The love of men for men in the strong friendship of school and college life is one of the marks of human divinity.

## CHAPTER VI.

In spite of his determination to get out and occupy his pulpit the first Sunday of the next month Philip was reluctantly obliged to let five Sundays go by before he was able to preach. During those six weeks his attention was called to a subject which he felt ought to be made the theme of one of his talks on "Christ and Modern Society." The leisure which he had for reading opened his eyes to the fact that Sunday in Milton was terribly desecrated. Shops of all kinds stood wide open. Excursion trains ran into the large city 40 miles away, two theaters were always running with some variety show, and the saloons, in violation of an ordinance forbidding it, unblushingly flung their doors open and did more business on that day than any other. As Philip read the papers he noticed that every Monday morning the police court was more crowded with "drunks" and "disorderlies" than on any other day in the week, and the plain cause of it was the abuse of the day before.

In the summer time baseball games were played in Milton on Sunday. In the fall and winter very many people spent their evenings in card playing or aimlessly strolling up and down the main street. These facts came to Philip's knowledge gradually, and he was not long in making up his mind that Christ would not keep silent before the facts. So he carefully prepared a plain statement of his belief in Christ's standing on the modern use of Sunday, and as on the other occasions when he had spoken the first Sunday in the month he cast out of his reckoning all thought of the consequences. His one purpose was to do just as, in his thought of Christ, he would do with that subject.

The people in Milton thought that the first Sunday Philip appeared in his pulpit he would naturally denounce the saloon again. But when he finally recovered sufficiently to preach he determined that for awhile he would say nothing in the way of sermons against the whisky evil. He had a great horror of seeming to ride a hobby, of being a man of one idea and making people tired of him because he harped on one string. He had uttered his denunciation, and he would wait a little before he spoke again. The whisky power was not the only bad thing in Milton that needed to be attacked. There were other things which must be said. And so Philip limped into his pulpit the third Sunday of the month and preached on a general theme, to the disappointment of a great crowd