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# MALCOM KIRK.

A Tale of Moral Heroism in Overcoming the World.

BY CHARLES M. SHELDON,

Author of "In His Steps," "Crucifixion of Philip Strong," "Robert Hardy's Seven Days."

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Illustrations by Herman Meyer.

## CHAPTER VII. THE ANGEL OF DEATH.

Nearly three years after Malcom Kirk and his wife had made their promise in the little Home Missionary church of Conrad, one evening in September, a stranger stepped out of the east bound Chicago express upon the platform at Conrad and inquired for the residence of the Rev. Malcom Kirk.

"He lives up by the church," said the man to whom the question was put. "Come out to the end of the platform and I'll show you."

The stranger followed, and the man pointed up the street where the tower of the little church could be seen.

"You'll find him in the parsonage close by at the right of the church."

The stranger thanked him and started down the platform steps, when the man called after him:

"They're having trouble at the minister's house. I thought if you didn't know I ought to tell you. They have a very sick baby there."

The stranger paused and looked uncertainly at the man.

"I won't go there, then, if I ought not. I am one of Mr. Kirk's old seminary classmates. I stopped off on my way home from Colorado, where I have been taking my vacation. Perhaps I had better not call there to-night. I didn't know of his trouble. Do you know how sick the baby is?"

"No. It's serious. The doctor has been there nearly all day."

The stranger hesitated and finally moved on toward the parsonage.

"I will simply stop and inquire at the house and then go to the hotel," he said to himself.

When he knocked at the little parsonage, Dorothy herself opened the door.

"This is Mrs. Kirk? I am Mr. Wilson, one of Mr. Kirk's classmates at Hermon. You remember me? I was on my way from Colorado and stopped off to see him. I only just heard of the illness of your baby. I—"

"Come in, Mr. Wilson. I know Malcom will want to see you," she said, and he entered with some reluctance to intrude at such a time, but her manner assured him that his presence was grateful to them.

Three years had made some changes in Dorothy. She was a beautiful still, and there was something more in the face which God's children always have after trial and suffering have purged the life within. Wilson noted in a glance the simple furnishings of the room, the unmistakable sign of economy.

He was struck also with the profound atmosphere of the first great trouble that had come into this woman's home. It was so positive that he felt unable to say anything commonplace by way of sympathy.

In the next room Malcom Kirk was walking up and down with his baby in his arms. The day had been very hot, and the upper chambers of the little house were stifling.

The Rev. George Wilson will never forget that sight this side the deathless paradise that all of the redeemed shall

It was the first time he had broken down in the presence of Dorothy. The sight of his old classmate had revived his Hermon memories. He saw again the old campus, its great avenues, its elms, the noble landscape of hills and woods, Dorothy's home across the campus, his own dingy little room, his life for the woman who now was sharing this great trouble with him. And he cried without attempt at concealment for his heart was sore at the loss of the baby out of a home where God himself had blessed the love of a man and wife as rarely in human life it has been blessed.

Finally he lifted up his face and spoke calmly:

"We've hoped all along, of course, but the long continued heat has been against his recovery. It's hard to put with the little fellow. See"—Malcom Kirk rose and took the baby in from his wife, while Dorothy set near a table and laid her head on her arms, but still a smile without a tear. "See, the little smiles at me still."

The baby opened his eyes, looked into Malcom Kirk's gaunt, agonized countenance, and a faint light came over its face.

"Malcom, oh, Malcom!" cried Dorothy. "I can't endure it!"

It was the first protest that had escaped her. Like him, the presence of this friend from the old loved place, the east had stirred her heart, and even as she cried aloud in her anguish the pent up tears came, and she cried in sobs that rent her husband's heart even more than the baby's sad smile.

Wilson choked as he rose to go and said: "Kirk, may God bless and help you at this time. I would stay and watch with you or help in any way."

"No; it will not be necessary. The neighbors and church people have been very kind to us. No one can do any more."

He went away to the hotel, promising to come in the morning to inquire, and the night grew on for Malcom and Dorothy. The doctor came in, a few of the most intimate church members also, but no one could do any more, and Malcom Kirk held the baby with a dexterity that relieved its suffering, they had not been able to place the body in a restful position in a bed, and it had grown used to its cradle of long strong arms.

It was toward morning, when no one was in the room except Malcom and Dorothy, that the baby died. It seemed to these two as they watched it go that their hearts broke, and the world turned black and empty before them when the last breath was drawn by that frail, trembling body. For little while Malcom held him. Then laid the body down on a couch, and kneeling there with his arms around his wife, he joined with her in a moment of unspeakable anguish for the death of their firstborn.

The sun came up dry and red, the heat of another day began to pour in to the little room, and it seemed to the bereaved parents as if the earth was a great, dry, burned out wilderness. The neighbors called. Wilson came, and his presence and silent sympathy were a blessing to Malcom and Dorothy. But when, later in the day, the baby had been laid in the little coffin and placed in the center of the room with a bunch of white geraniums on its breast brought in by the members of Dorothy's primary Sunday school class Dorothy laid her head down on the table beside the casket, and her grief was very great. Malcom stood beside her, looking hungrily at his baby's face, and the people in the little room quietly went out and left them alone for a while.

Next day Wilson read the funeral service and prayed at the house, and after the simple service a little company went with Malcom and Dorothy to the cemetery just on the edge of the town, and the baby was buried there, and these children of the All Father went back to the little parsonage.

It was a great blessing to them at this time that Wilson was with them. He, seeing how they clung to his presence, staid over Sunday and preached for Malcom. It was during this stay that he learned something of what Malcom and Dorothy had been doing. A short extract from a letter written by him to his wife in the east will show us something of the first three years of Malcom Kirk and his wife's attempt to make good their pledge to help redeem the lives of the people of Conrad:

"I cannot tell you what a profound sense of sympathy I have felt for my old classmate and his wife during their great trouble, but I am simply astonished to find how great a work they have done in the three years they have been here. This is a place of about 2,000 people. It is having a boom at the present time."

"The agitation over the saloon is increasing, and I am told by Kirk and others that things are nearing a crisis and in all likelihood the next legislature will pass a prohibitory amendment. The liquor men laugh at this probability and scout the idea that such a law can ever be passed. There are ten saloons here in Conrad and all apparently flourishing. Among other things that the whisky element has attempted during Kirk's stay here has

been to antagonize the business men in his church against Kirk with some success. Kirk's wife has been a great help to him. I think I never knew a more happy union of workers in all my life. She has been the organizer and the leader in Sunday school work, and her social influence in the town is very strong. The church membership has grown from forty odd to over a hundred, and Kirk has managed to gain a hold on a large group of young men, I think largely on account of their admiration for his unusual muscular development. I think it is probably true from what I feel and hear that already the influence of Kirk and his wife and their little church in this wild western town is the strongest influence that ever entered the place. They are very much broken up by the loss of their baby. It has been a tremendous disappointment to them. I am very anxious for them, as I think of what the result may be on their future work. The pay of a Home Missionary out here is small, and for some reason Kirk has not been able to make much with his writing. I cannot help asking myself how the loss of their baby will affect their whole work here. Mrs. Kirk seems to be stunned by the blow. I shall leave here Monday, and my greatest regret is that I cannot be of more help to my old classmate. He is at a crisis in his career, and everything depends on the way he accepts this death of his baby."

[TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.]

Trying to Please Employers.

Mistress—I am surprised. You say you were married six months ago, divorced three months ago, and remarried to your husband last night.

Domestic—Yes'm. You see, at the first place he had they wanted a married man, so we got married; but the next place they wanted a single man, so we got divorced, and I came here. Now he's found a place where they want a man for gardening and wife to cook, so we got married again, and I'm going there with him.—N. Y. Weekly.

Good News for News.

"Henry," whispered the maiden, in some embarrassment, as they stood in the hallway, where the young and handsome reporter was preparing to say good-night. "It's dreadful of me, I know, but I've been eating onions."

"Great Scott, Fannie!" he exclaimed. "You don't think that's a scoop on me, do you? I knew that as soon as I came in."—Chicago Tribune.

A Glorious Example.

Ab, he was poor and friendless when he bravely started out; but well he won his way with me. And died, at last, of gout.

—Chicago Times-Herald.

AFTER THE FIRST QUARREL.

He—So our engagement is off, is it?

She—Yes.

He—Then gimme back me chewin' gum.—Chicago Inter Ocean.

Life's Misfits.

Our wisdom comes too late to fill our deeds with joy complete; We seldom find the mustard 'till we've eaten all our meat.

—Elliott's Magazine.

Cheerful.

"Is there any way," said the mother of the family that had just moved in to the neighbor on the other side of the backyard fence, "by which we can get rid of the cockroaches in this house?"

"Well," replied the neighbor, "all the other folks that's lived in that house has got rid of 'em by movin' away."—Chicago Tribune.

A Recipe.

Some deep-drawn sighs, Two dreamy eyes, And lips as red as roses

A smile, a tear, And then, my dear, The average man proposes.

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Curiosity.

"Women are funny creatures," mused the janitor philosopher. "Lit wan woman in th' car drop a letter, an' th' woman opposite will roide tin blocks out av her way tryin' to pick up that letter whin no wan is lookin'."—Chicago Daily News.

An Amended Statement.

Jack—You are the only girl—

Mabel—Come now! You know I can't believe that.

Jack—Wait till I am through. You are the only girl who ever refused to believe that she was the only girl I ever loved.—N. Y. Journal.

Retort Airy.

"Those acrobats are very fresh."

Said Miss Magee to me: "O, some are fresh and somersault,"

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WEARY WILLIE'S PROPOSAL.

"Fair lady, if you think I am an impostor, you may call your husband."

"I hain't got any husband!"

"Ah, then, may I offer my heart and hand?"—N. Y. World.

Malcom stared at the shabby, dusty, worn-out figure, and instantly it flashed into him that she had probably not heard yet that his baby was dead. Her next words told him that was the fact. "I've come straight here from home. My boy, Mr. Kirk, have you seen him? He left the farm Saturday with the double team and a load of hay. I haven't seen him since. I know he is in some saloon, drinking or drunk, and the money for the hay all spent. Oh, Mr. Kirk, for God's sake help me to find him and get him home again! For the love of your own baby that you expect to grow up into a good Christian man to comfort and bless you help me to get my boy out of this hell and save him, for my heart is broken when I think of how he was once as innocent and happy as your own baby."

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