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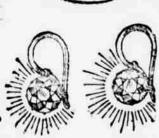
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# MALCOM KIRK.

A Tale of Moral Heroism In Overcoming the World.

BY CHARLES M. SHELDON, Author of "In His Steps," "Crucifixion of Philip Strong," "Bobert Hardy's Seven Days."

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CHAPTER XIII.

TWENTY YEARS AFTER. Nearly 20 years had gone by since that night of the election, when Dorothy had kneeled in front of Valmer's saloon, in the main street of Conrad, when one evening a well dressed, distinguished looking gentleman stepped out of the west bound express upon the

"Does Mr. Kirk live where he used to?" he asked of one of the loungers at the station.

"Yes; he lives up by the church," was the answer.

The stranger went on down the main street, looking about him curiously, and finally stopped in front of a comfortable looking house close by a good sized church building.

He went up the short board walk and rang the bell.

The door was opened by a girl about 19 years of age, a girl with a great profusion of heavy brown hair and a face that people had to look at twice before they knew whether she was what is generally called "pretty" or not. "Is your father at home?" asked the

gentleman, smiling.

"I don't know. Will you come in? That is, unless you have something to sell. And then I am sure father is out." She said it without the least appearance of being pert or rude.

"I haven't anything to sell," replied the stranger, laughing. "I am George Wilson, one of your father's old classmates in Hermon, and he""Come right in," said the girl. "Any

one from Hermon is welcome. I've heard father speak of you often." "This is Faith, is it?" he asked as he

entered a pleasant sitting room. "Yes, sir," she answered shyly. "Excuse me, I'll call father."

Rev. George Wilson of the famous Institutional church of Boston looked around him, and his look was full of the most absorbing interest.

What he felt and thought can perhaps best be told in a letter which he wrote home two days afterward while sitting in the guest chamber of the parsonage. The letter threw much light on the events of the past 20 years and is of value as coming from one who saw Malcom Kirk and his family at this time, both as a friend and also as an intensely interested spectator of a very remarkable life.

"I am sitting in Malcom Kirk's bouse," the letter began, "and it is difficult for me to realize all that that fact means. There is no question in my mind that Kirk is in some ways one of the most remarkable ministers in this country, and yet he and his talented wife have remained in this comparatively obscure place for over 20 years, working quietly and without ostentation, with some most astonishing results until lately unheard of by the churches in the east.

"Since I was in Conrad about 20 years ago great changes have occurred in the state. Perhaps the greatest change of all has been the prohibitory amendment to the constitution. Every one knows that the election on the leg-Islature's act to submit the amendment resulted in an affirmative vote. Every one also knows that the people have never reversed that decision, and

"You will also remember what an excitement was caused by one event in Conrad at the close of that famous election day. I listened to the story ly proud of their father and of what he from Kirk's own lips, and it was as exciting as any novel I ever read.

"He had been called out of town on done? the afternoon of that day to see a young man who died of the effects of a drunken debauch, and as he came back to Conrad in the evening his wife was kneeling in the center of a group of other women, holding a prayer meeting in front of one of the most notorious saloons then in Conrad.

"He had only just come to the place when a great disturbance broke out in the saloon behind him. Some one broke through the crowd and attempted to throw a bottle of vitriol at Mrs. Kirk. It was afterward shown that the man was crazy with drink and awfully excited by the events of the day. He was only partly successful in his horrible attempt. Mrs. Kirk's face was burned on one side, but a man of the name of Carver, who had been drinking, but was sober enough to realize what was going on, grappled with the other and took away the bottle, receiving dreadful burns in doing so. This man is now the sexton in Mr. Kirk's church, a devout, sincere Christian and a good example, so Kirk says, of hundreds of men who will remain sober if the saloon is taken away and the constant temptation to drink is absent. And so far as I can observe he is decidedly

right in his belief. "Well, Mrs. Kirk has recovered from those injuries, and her beauty of face, which is still remarkable, is marred only by a scar which gives her, to all who know her history, an added interest. The affair created an intense feeling here for a long time. Nothing so terrible had been known since that attempt to disfigure Mrs. Coleman of Marville, Canada, while marching with other women in a temperance procession. The event opened many people's eyes to the satanic power of the drink evil. It was only one out of countless events where the whisky element has stood for the greatest crimes and for

which it must answer heavily at the judgment bar of a long suffering God.

"It is difficult for me to write of Malcom Kirk without seeming to exagger ate and overemphasize his work. I want to speak of his beautiful family, which is a part of the best part of this western town.

"Mrs. Kirk has developed into a woman of rare power in all the church and social life of the place. Years ago the women here recognized her ability as a leader by making her president of the Christian Temperance union. It was largely through her efforts that the township polled a very heavy vote for the amendment. She has thrown all her rare talents as a gifted musician also into the redemption of the town, with the result that no woman has such an influence as she has on all the young, thoughtless life that has crowded in here during the town's rapid growth in the years of eighty-six and

"There are three children, two boys, named Gilbert and Hermon, and a girl, the oldest child, named Faith. The boys are bright, handsome fellows and take after the mother. Gilbert is 17 and Hermon 15. Faith, who is nearly 19, is like her father. I have not yet been able to tell whether she is what you wonten would call 'pretty' or not, but she is one of the most interesting individual girls I ever met. She is fond of trying experiments and resembles her father in that respect. She wants to know and feel things for herself and is passionately fond of doing for other people. I begin to get the impression that she is thoroughly unselfish and that she has the making of a remarkably useful woman. But I predlet for her some trying experiences. She is one of those girls who She went out of the room, and the would make her father and mother



"Come right in," said the girl. "Any one from Hermon is welcome."

anxious for her future if it were not for the fact that they and herself are Christian in their whole nature. That is the salvation of such a girl as Faith. It seems probable that they never will and Mr. and Mrs. Kirk seem to be peacefully sure of the fact. All of the children are members of the church, and all three of them are very evidenthas done.

"You ask, What has Malcom Kirk

"In the first place, in spite of what seemed like impossibilities, he succeeded years ago in building a church and parsonage, both of which had been burned down, it is supposed, by the whisky men during the fight which went on before the amendment was carried. The church is a comfortable structure, seating 300 or 400 people, with several classrooms attached. The parsonage is a good house of eight rooms, fairly well furnished, although Kirk's peculiar habits of generosity have not permitted anything approaching luxury even in the slightest degree.

"But the building of the church and



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wife have revolutionized the moral the basket to find some thread. life of this whole town. When they came here about 20 years ago, they suit," said Dorothy gravely. "He must found a community of 1,500 people. A try to get along with it this fall, anygreat amount of lawless, thoughtless way. Mend it as carefully as you can, life crowded the saloons, the dancehouses, the cheap resorts of amusement. Kirk and his wife, after passing through an experience of great silk. At the same time, mother, don't suffering and temptation, most of which has always been unknown even ground would be a warning to Gilbert to their own people, came out of their affliction with astonishing power over the life of the place. There is no question that the very thinking of the people here is shaped by Malcom Kirk's Christianity. The promise he and his wife made when they came here has been constantly in mind. The number of lost men and boys who have been attracted to Kirk's ministry and to Mrs. not to be disturbed." Kirk's singing and playing and led to Christ is amazing. Even the business and political life of the town has been shaped by Kirk's purpose in life. That ing?" means a great deal, as any one will acknowledge. This fact, however, is couldn't come at any other time." shown by the common allusions to Conrad by other towns. They speak of it as 'Kirkville.' A higher compliment to a man's influence it would be difficult trance. to find.

"It is of cause still true that the devil does business in Conrad. Kirk has told me that the whisky men have never ceased from the day they were driven out of Conrad to attempt to come back in some form and carry on their work. At the present time he tells me that through failure on the part of the officers of the law to enforce the law the whisky men have grown bold and opened several places. He is right now in the midst of the old struggle again. This time it is a struggle with state and county officials who have broken their oaths of office. It is the same struggle in another form. At the bottom of the whisky business in any state; whether it has a prohibitory statute or not, is the incentive of great financial returns for a very little real labor and also the human passion for drink, two things which Kirk says must be recognized by the temperance people and always reckoned upon in the problem of temperance.

"It remains therefore to be said that so far as Kirk and his wife are concerned the contest they began here. the battle they entered for victory over the world, still goes on. Is there a place in the world where a Christian may cease from fighting the good light of the faith? But 1 am profoundly touched by the extent of overcoming to be seen in this place. I have been unable to silence the question, 'What if every minister as he entered a new place, no matter how small or difficult, entered it with a passion like Kirk's to redeem the lost part of it and bring it back to God? I know this much is true . the work done here. There has be , no unusual excitement and no ex raordinary means produce the astonishing are is no question that Kirk has cert in qualities that have belped him. His voice is, as it always was, a fine instrument. He knows how to talk to people, and he writes uncommonly well. But, on the other hand, he is still awkward, homely of appearance and by no means always at his

best. He loves people. He longs, as

Paul did, for the salvation of the

world. And there lies the secret of his

work. It is nothing which other men

may not also have. "I don't know a minister in our churches anywhere who might not claim all that Malcom Kirk and his wife have claimed. They have overcome the world by means of their love, by following the plain path of duty at the cost of suffering, by not pleasing themselves. They are still engaged in the struggle. It will never cease this side of death and paradise. But I wish that every pastor and every church might come here and see what has been done and what the future seems certain to record. The most malignant forces of evil have evidently arrayed themselves against Kirk and his wife. and so far these two have overcome them all. Heaven has won the victory out here, and I do not know why it should not do so everywhere. Do we want the world to be saved? Do we have a passion to save it? Do we put the kingdom first? If we did, should we not see the results everywhere that we see here? I shall return home from my visit to Malcom Kirk with that

question sounding in my heart." There was one brief allusion in this letter which meant even more than Wilson knew. It was his allusion to what he called Malcom Kirk's "pecultar habits of generosity." Indirectly these led to events which have to do with this history of the human conflict against sin and involved in that growing conflict all the members of Kirk's family.

A few days after Wilson's departure Faith and her mother were sitting together in the "common room," as Faith called it, the room that the family used for dining and sitting room together. Dorothy was sewing, and Faith was helping her with some work on the boys' suits.

It was about 11 o'clock in the morning, and Malcom Kirk was up stairs in his study. The boys were at school, and Faith, who had finished the high school, had been staying at home for two years belping her mother.

"Mother, how does Gilbert manage to tear his coat across the back like that?" asked Faith, holding up that garment and looking at it with grave astonishment.

Dorothy could not help smiling, although the next instant she sighed a

"He said one of the boys pushed him against a wire fence last Saturday while they were out fishing near "The "Well, the boy that did it ought to be

made to wear it after I have mended

parsonage is in one sense the very ment fit the crime," said Faith as smallest thing that Kirk has done. It she stabbed the back of the coat with is not too much to say that he and his a big needle and began turning over

"I'm sorry Gilbert hasn't a better

"Yes, ma'am," replied Faith. "I am trying to find somethin; besides white you think white silk on a black backnot to get his coat torn again?"

Mrs. Kirk laughed, and before she could answer the bell rang.

Faith put aside the work and went to the door. "Can I see Mr. Kirk?" asked a voice

that Dorothy recognized at once. "No," said Faith decidedly. "Father is in his study writing, and he ought

"But he told me to call today, and I want to see him very much." "Did he tell you to call this morn-

"Well-no-he said today. But I

There was silence a moment while Faith stood holding the door uncertainly, but still resolutely blocking the en-

Malcom Kirk came out of his study at the top of the upper hall. "Is that Mr. Barnes, Faith? Tell him to come up.

Faith at once stepped aside, and a shabby looking man came in. As he passed the door of the sitting room be bowed clumsily and sald, "Good morning, Mrs. Kirk." Then he stumbled noisily up stairs and entered Malcom's study. The door closed, and Faith went back to her work.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK, I

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