

CRUCIFIX PHILIP STRONG

SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

Chapter I.—Philip Strong, a minister, receives two calls, one to a college town, where he may live a quiet, scholarly life, the other to a manufacturing town, where there is plenty of work to do among the laboring classes. He accepts the more active field. II and III.—Philip discovers that a number of his wealthy parishioners have property rented for saloons and gambling houses. He interviews one of them and is advised that he had better not stir up the subject, and Mr. Winter, one of his most prominent parishioners, having property rented for such purposes, rises from his seat and walks out of the church. The next morning Winter calls on the minister and represents what he calls an insult to himself, then, threatening to withdraw his support from the church, retires in high dudgeon. The sermon creates great excitement, and next Sunday a large crowd attends Philip's church, expecting a sensational sermon, but Philip disappoints them, preaching on a different subject entirely. IV.—Philip attacks the saloons and preaches against them to a large congregation. He calls upon the people to join with him in an attempt to exterminate them. Later he leaves his house to visit a sick child, and a man on the opposite side of the street fires two shots at him. V.—Philip has been severely though not mortally wounded. His assailant is arrested and at Philip's request, is brought before him. Philip assures him that he bears him no ill will and prays for him. VI.—Philip preaches on the Sunday question and makes new enemies. Coming home one evening, he finds his wife in a faint on the floor, a knife stuck into the neck and two anonymous scrawls, one addressed "To the Preacher," the other, "To the Preacher's Wife." VII.—They were warnings to leave the town. The minister's wife begs her husband to leave the field for another, but instead he prepares to continue the war against the devil there and in his own fashion. VIII.—Philip accuses his parishioners by proposing to move their church edifice into the tenement district. He speaks to the laboring men at their hall and unintentionally influences them against the rich by holding up the selfishness of many rich people. When he goes home he is informed that a mob is threatening Mr. Winter at his residence. IX.—Philip goes to the scene of the trouble and rescues Mr. Winter from the mob, and XI.—Philip preaches against wasteful expenditures when the poor are in need and is visited by a stranger, who asks for food and shelter, who tells his benefactor that he lives too extravagantly for one who preaches against extravagance. Philip calls him "Brother Man."

(Continued.)

CHAPTER XIII.

The door of the classroom was closed, and Philip and the trustees sat together. There was a moment of embarrassing silence, and then the spokesman for the board, a nervous little man, said:

"Mr. Strong, we hardly know just what to say to this proposition of yours this morning, about going out of the parsonage and turning it into an orphan asylum. But it is certainly a very remarkable proposition, and we felt as if we ought to meet you at once and talk it over."

"It's simply impossible," spoke up one of the trustees. "In the first place, it is impracticable as a business proposition."

"Do you think so?" asked Philip quietly.

"It is out of the question!" said the first speaker excitedly. "The church will never listen to it in the world. For my part, if Brother Strong wishes to do it, let him go."

At that moment the sexton knocked at the door and said a man was outside very anxious to see the minister and have him come down to his house. There had been an accident or a fight or something. Some of the trustees wanted Mr. Strong at once. So Philip hastily excused himself and went out, leaving the trustees together. The door was hardly shut again when the speaker who had been interrupted jumped to his feet and exclaimed:

"As I was saying, for my part if Brother Strong wishes to indulge in this eccentric action he will not have the sanction of the church. It is certainly an entirely unheard-of and uncalled-for proposition."

"Mr. Strong has no doubt a generous motive in this proposed action," said a third member of the board, "but the church certainly will not approve any such step as the giving up of the parsonage. He exaggerates the need of such a sacrifice. I think we ought to reason him out of the idea."

"We called Mr. Strong to the pasture of Calvary church," said another, "and it seems to me he came under the conditions granted in our call. For the church to allow such an absurd thing as the giving up of the parsonage to this proposed outside work would be a very unwise move."

"Yes, and more than that," said the first speaker. "I want to say very frankly that I am growing tired of the way things have gone in Mr. Strong's case. What business has Calvary church with all these outside matters, these labor troubles and unemployed men and all the other matters that have been made the subject of preaching lately? I want a minister who looks after his own parish. Mr. Strong does not call on his own people. He has not been inside my house but once since he came to Milton. Brothers, there is a growing feeling of discontent over this matter."

There was a short pause, and then one of the members said:

"Surely if Mr. Strong feels dissatisfied with his surroundings in the parsonage or feels as if his work lay in another direction he is at liberty to choose another parish. But he is the finest pulpit minister we ever had, and no one doubts his entire sincerity. He is a remarkable man in many respects."

"Yes, but sincerity may be a very awkward thing carried too far. And in this matter of the parsonage I don't see how the trustees can allow it. Why, what would the other churches think of it? Calvary church cannot allow anything of the kind for the sake of its reputation. But I would like to hear Mr. Winter's opinion. He has not spoken yet."

The rest turned to the mill owner, who, as chairman of the board, usually had much to say and was regarded as a shrewd and careful business adviser. In the excitement of the occasion and discussion the usual formalities of a regular board meeting had been ignored.

Mr. Winter was evidently embarrassed. He had listened to the discussion

of the minister with his head bent down and his thoughts in a whirl of emotion both for and against the pastor. His naturally inclined business habits contended against the proposition to give up the parsonage. His feelings of gratitude to the minister for his personal help the night of the attack by the mob rose up to defend him. There was with it all an undercurrent of self-interest. He realized that the pastor had set the whole church an example of usefulness. He wondered how many of the members would voluntarily give up half their incomes for the good of humanity. He wondered how many would follow his example and give up half their worldly wealth for the good of humanity. He would give up half his salary to carry on the work of a child's refuge or something of that kind.

"How can we accept such an offer?" Calvary church has always believed in paying its minister a good salary and paying it promptly, and we want our minister to live decently and be able to appear as he should among the best of the community. The nervous little man who had been the first to speak.

"Still, we cannot deny that it is a very generous thing for Mr. Strong to do. He certainly is entitled to credit for his unselfish proposal. No one can charge him with being worldly-minded," said Mr. Winter, feeling a new interest in the subject as he found himself defending the minister.

"Are you in favor of allowing him to do what he proposes in the matter of the parsonage?" asked another.

"I don't see that we can hinder Mr. Strong from living anywhere he pleases if he wants to. The church cannot compel him to live in the parsonage."

"No, but it can choose not to have such a minister!" exclaimed the first speaker again excitedly, "and I for one am most decidedly opposed to the whole thing. I do not see how the church can allow it and maintain its self respect."

"Do you think the church is ready to tell Mr. Strong that his services are not wanted any longer?" asked Mr. Winter.

"I am, for one of the members, and I know others who feel as I do if matters go in this way much longer. I tell you, Brother Winter, Calvary church is very near a crisis. Look at the conditions of the Malverns and the Albers. They are all leaving us, and the plain reason is the nature of the preaching. Why, you know yourself, Brother Winter, that never has the pulpit of Calvary church heard such preaching as this. It is a matter of business which rests with the church to arrange."

The nervous, irritable little man who had spoken oftenest rose to his feet and said: "You can count me out of all this, then. I wash my hands of the whole affair. And he went out of the room, leaving the rest of the board somewhat surprised at his sudden departure.

There remained about a quarter of an hour discussing the matter, and finally, at Mr. Winter's suggestion, a committee was appointed to go and see if he could not be persuaded to modify or change his proposition made in the morning sermon. The rest of the trustees insisted that Mr. Winter himself should act as chairman of the committee, and after some remonstrance he finally, with great reluctance, agreed to do so.

Philip next evening, as he sat in his study mapping out the week's work and wondering a little what the church would do in the face of his proposal, received the committee, welcoming them in his nightgown and slippers. He had been thinking of Sunday evening of the approaching conference. The committee consisted of Mr. Winter and two other members of the board.

Mr. Winter opened the conversation with considerable embarrassment and an evident reluctance for his share in the matter.

"Mr. Strong, we have come, as you are aware, to talk over your proposition of yesterday morning concerning the parsonage. It was a great surprise to us all."

Philip smiled a little. "Mrs. Strong says I act too much on impulse and do not prepare people enough for my statements. But one of the greatest men I ever knew used to say that an impulse was a good thing to obey instantly if there was no doubt of its being a right one."

"And do you consider this proposed move yours a right one, Mr. Strong?" asked Mr. Winter.

"I do," replied Philip, with quiet emphasis. "I do not regret making it, and I believe it is my duty to abide by it."

"Do you mean that you intend actually to move out of this parsonage?" asked one of the other members of the committee.

"Yes," Philip said it so quietly and yet so decidedly that the men were silent a moment. Then Mr. Winter said:

"Mr. Strong, this matter is likely to cause trouble in the church, and we might as well understand it frankly. The trustees believe that as the parsonage belongs to the church property and was built for the minister he ought to live in it. The church will not understand your desire to move out."

"Do you understand it, Mr. Winter?" Philip put the question point blank.

"No, I don't know that I do wholly," Mr. Winter colored and replied in a hesitating manner.

"I gave my reasons yesterday morning. I do not know that I can make them plainer. The truth is I cannot go on preaching to my people about living on a simpler basis while I continue to live in surroundings that on the face of them contradict my own convictions. In other words, I am living beyond my necessities here. I have lived all my life surrounded by the luxuries of civilization. If now I desire to give these benefits to those who have never enjoyed them or to know from nearer contact something of the bitter struggle of the poor, why should I be hindered from putting that desire into practical form?"

"The question is, Mr. Strong," said one of the other trustees, "whether this is the best way to get it. We do not question your sincerity nor doubt your honesty, but will your leaving the parsonage and living in a less expensive house on half your present salary help your church work or reach more people and save more souls?"

"I am glad you put it in that way," exclaimed Philip, eagerly turning to the speaker. "That is just it. Will my proposed move result in bringing the church and the minister into closer and more vital relations with the people most in need of spiritual and physical uplifting? Out of the depths of my nature I believe it will. The chasm between the church and the people in these days must be bridged by the spir-

By Rev. Charles M. Sheldon, Author of "In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?" "Malcom Kirk," "Robert Hardy's Seven Days," Etc.

it of sacrifice in material things. It is in vain for us to preach spiritual truths unless we live physical truths. What the world is looking for today are object lessons in self denial on the part of Christian people."

For a moment no one spoke. Then Mr. Winter said:

"About your proposal that this house be turned into a refuge or home for homeless children, Mr. Strong, do you consider that idea practicable? Is it business? Is it possible?"

"Believe it is, very decidedly. The number of homeless and vagrant children at present in Milton would astonish you. This house could be put into beautiful shape as a detention house until homes could be found for the children in Christian families."

"It would take a great deal of money to manage it."

"Yes," replied Philip with a sadness which had its cause deep within him. "It would cost something. But can the world be made better by the sacrifice of a few dollars? It would save at least an immense sum, if not of money at least of an equivalent? Is it possible for us to get at the heart of

the great social problem without feeling the need of using all our powers to solve it rightly?"

Mr. Winter shook his head. He did not understand the minister. His action and his words were both foreign to the mill owner's regular business habits of thought and performance.

"What will you do, Mr. Strong, if the church refuses to listen to this proposed plan of yours?"

"I suppose," answered Philip after a little pause, "the church will not object to my living in another house at my own charge."

"There is no right to compel you to live here," Mr. Winter turned to the other members of the committee. "I said so at our previous meeting. Gentlemen, am I not right in that?"

"Mr. Strong to live here," said one of the others. "It is a question of the church's expecting him to do so. It is the parsonage and the church home for the minister. In my opinion it will cause trouble if Mr. Strong moves out. People will not understand it."

"That is my belief, too, Mr. Strong," said Mr. Winter. "It would be better for you to modify or change or, better still, to abandon this plan. It will not be understood and will cause trouble."

"Suppose the church should rent the parsonage then," suggested Philip. "It would then be getting a revenue from the property. That, with the thousand dollars on my salary, could be wisely and generously used to relieve much suffering in Milton this winter. The church could easily rent the house."

That was true, as the parsonage stood on a corner of the most desirable part of B street and would command good rental.

"Then you persist in this plan of yours, do you, Mr. Strong?" asked the third member of the committee, who had for the most part been silent.

"Yes, I consider that under the circumstances, local and universal, it is my duty. Where I propose to go is a house which I can get for \$8 a month. It is in the tenement district, but so far from the church and this neighborhood that I need be isolated too much from my church family."

Mr. Winter looked serious and perplexed. The other trustees looked dissatisfied. It was evident they regarded the whole thing with disfavor.

Mr. Winter rose abruptly. He could not avoid a feeling of anger in spite of his obligation to the minister. He also had a vivid recollection of his former interview with the pastor in that study. And yet he struggled with the vague resistance against the feeling that Philip was proposing to do a thing that could result in only one way—not in the matter of the parsonage, but in the matter of the church's feeling toward him. With all the rest went a suppressed but conscious emotion of wonder that a man would of his own free will give up a luxurious home for the sake of any one.

"The matter of reduction of salary, Mr. Strong, will have to come before the church. The trustees cannot vote to accept your proposal. I am very sorry that the church will not oppose the reduction. You can see how it would place us in an unfavorable light."

"Not necessarily, Mr. Winter," said Philip. "If the church will simply regard it as my own great desire and as one of the ways by which we may help forward our work in Milton, I am sure we need have no fear of being put in a false light. The church does not propose this reduction. It comes from me and in a time of peculiar emergency, both financial and social. It is a thing which has been done several times by other ministers."

"That may be. Still, I am positive Calvary church will regard it as unnecessary and will oppose it."

"It will not make any difference practically," replied Philip, with a smile. "I can easily dispose of a thousand dollars where it is needed by others more than by me. But I would prefer that the church would actually pay out the money to them rather than myself."

Mr. Winter and the other trustees looked at Philip in wonder, and with a few words of farewell they left the parsonage.

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on Philip's part. It would be presenting the church in a false light to picture it as entirely opposed up to this date to Philip's preaching and ideas of Christian living. He had built up a strong buttress of admitting and believing members of the church. This buttress with Mr. Winter's influence, as a breakwater against the tidal wave of opposition now beginning to pour in upon him. There was an element in Calvary church conservatism, a deep-seated yet strong belief in the growing belief that Christian action and church work in the world had reached a certain crisis which would result either in the death or life of the church in America. Philip's preaching and strengthened this feeling. His last move had started this element, and it wished to wait for developments. The proposal of some that the minister be requested to resign was finally overruled, and it was decided not to oppose his desertion of the parsonage, while the matter of reduction of salary was voted upon in the negative.

But feeling was roused to a high pitch, and many of the members declared their intention of refusing to attend services. Some said they would not pay their pledges any longer. A prevailing majority, however, ruled in favor of Philip, and the action of the meeting was formally sent him by the clerk.

Meanwhile Philip moved out of the parsonage into his new quarters. The daily paper, which had given a sensational account of his sermon, laying out the parsonage and the voluntary proposition referring to his salary, now came out with a column and a half devoted to his carrying out of his determination to abandon the parsonage and get nearer the people in the tenements. The article was widely copied and variously commented upon. In Milton his action was condemned by many, defended by some. Very few seemed to understand his exact motive. The majority took it as a personal move and expressed regret in one form and another that a man of such marked intellectual power as Mr. Strong seemed to possess lacked balance and good judgment. Some called him a crank.

The people in the tenement district were too much absorbed in their sufferings and selfishness to show any demonstration. It remained to be seen whether they would be any better to him in his new home.

So matters stood when the first Sunday of the new month came and Mr. Strong again stood before his church with his Christ message. It had been a wearing month to him. Gradually he had been growing more and more of a sense of almost isolation in his pulpit work. He wondered if he had interpreted Christ aright. He probed deeper and deeper into the springs of action that moved the historical Jesus and again and again he saw Him in the sense of almost isolation in his pulpit work.

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entire. But there breathed from his face the element of a perfect peace.

"Brother Man," said Philip cheerily, "come in and rest yourself."

"Can you keep me over night?"

The question was put wistfully. Philip was struck by the difference between this almost shrinking request and the self invitation of a month before.

"Yes, indeed. We have one spare room for you. You are welcome. Come in."

So they went in, and after tea the two sat down together while Mrs. Strong was busy in the kitchen. A part of this conversation was afterward related by the minister to his wife. A part of it he afterward said was unreportable—the manner of tone, the inflection, the gesture of his remarkable guest no man could reproduce.

"You have moved since I saw you last," said the visitor.

"Yes," replied Philip. "You did not expect me to act on your advice so soon."

"My advice?" The question came in a hesitating tone. "Did I advise you to move? Ah, yes, I remember!" A

There sat the Brother Man on the step.

light like supreme reason flashed over the man's face and then died out.

"Yes, yes; you are beginning to live on your simple basis. You are doing as you preach. That must feel good."

"Yes," replied Philip, "it does feel good. Do you think, Brother Man, that this will help to solve the problem?"

"What problem?"

"Why the problem of the church and the people—winning them, saving them."

"Are your church members moving out of their elegant houses and coming down here to live?" The old man asked the question in utmost simplicity.

"No, I did not ask them."

"You ought to."

"What do you believe my people ought literally to leave their possessions and live among the people?"

Philip could not help asking the question, and all the time he was conscious of a strange absurdity, mingled with an unaccountable respect for his visitor and his opinion.

"Yes," came the reply, with the calmness of light. "Christ would demand it if he were pastor of Calvary church in this age. The church members, the Christians in this century, must renounce all that they have or they cannot be His disciples."

Philip sat profoundly silent. The words spoken so quietly by this creature tossed upon his own soul like a vessel in a tempest. He dared not say anything for a moment. The Brother Man looked over and said at last:

"What have you been preaching about since you came here?"

"A great many things."

"What are some of the things you have preached about?"

"Well"—Philip clasped his hands over his knees—"I have preached about a kingdom of God on earth, the evil of the saloon, the Sunday as a day of rest and worship, the necessity of moving our church building down into this neighborhood, the need of living on a simpler basis and, lastly, the new work of a church in these days."

"Has your church done what you have preached about?"

"No," replied Philip, with a sigh.

in him which called out such confidence.

Mr. Strong soothed his wife, clasping her to his tenderly. "There, Sarah, you are nervous and tired. I am a little discouraged, but strong and hearty for the work. Brother Man, you must not think we regret your advice. We have been blessed by following it."

And then their remarkable guest stretched out his arms through the gathering gloom in the room and seemed to bless them. After a while he again called for a Bible and offered a prayer of wondrous sweetness. He was shown to his plainly furnished room. He looked around and smiled.

"This is like my old home," he said: "a palace, where the poor die of hunger."

Philip started at the odd remark, then recollected that the old man had once been a pauper, and sometimes in his half dazed condition Philip thought probable he confounded the humblest surroundings with his once luxurious home. He lingered a moment, and the man said, as if speaking to himself, "If they do not renounce all they have, they cannot be my disciples."

"Good night, Brother Man," cried Philip as he went out.

"Good night, Christ's man," replied his guest, and Philip went to his rest that night, great questions throbbing in him and the demands of the Master more distinctly brought to his attention than ever.

Again, as before when he rose in the morning, he found that his visitor was gone. His eccentric movements accounted for his sudden disappearance, but they were disappointed. They wanted to see their guest again and question him about his history. They promised themselves he would do so next time.

The following Sunday Philip preached one of those sermons which come to a man once or twice in a whole ministry. It was the last Sunday of the month and not a great occasion. But there had surged into his thought the meaning of the Christian life with such uncontrollable power that his sermon reached hearts never before touched. He remained at the close of the service to talk with several young men, who seemed moved as never before. After they had gone away he went into his own room back of the platform to get something he had left there and to his surprise found the church sexton kneeling down by one of the chairs.

As the minister came in the man rose and turned toward him.

"Mr. Strong, I want to be a Christian. I want to join the church and lead a different life from the one I am now leading."

Philip clasped his hand, while tears rolled over the man's face. He stayed and talked with him and prayed with him, and when he finally went home the minister was convinced it was as good as a conversion as he had ever seen. He at once related the story to his wife, who had gone on before to get dinner.

"Why, Philip," she exclaimed when he said the sexton wanted to be baptized and join the church at the next communion, "Calvary church will never allow him to unite with us!"

"Why not?" asked Philip in amazement.

"Because he is a negro," replied his wife.

Philip stood a moment in silence, with his hat in his hand, looking at his wife as she spoke.

CHAPTER XV.

"Well," said Philip slowly as he seemed to grasp the meaning of his wife's words, "to tell the truth, I never thought of that!" He sat down and looked troubled. "Do you think, Sarah, that because he is a negro the church will refuse to receive him to membership? It would not be Christian to refuse him."

"There are other things that are Christian which the church of Christ does not do," replied his wife almost bitterly. "But what ever else Calvary church may do or not I am very certain it will never consent to admit to membership a black man."

"But there are so few negroes in Milton that they have no church. I cannot counsel him to unite with his own people. Calvary church must admit him!" Philip spoke with the quiet determination which always marked his convictions when they were settled.

"But suppose the committee refuses to report his name favorably to the church, what then?" Mrs. Strong spoke with a gleam of triumph, her heart that Philip would be roused to indignation that he would resign and leave Milton.

Philip did not reply at once. He was having an inward struggle with his own mind and was weighing his interpretation of his Christ.

"I don't know, Sarah. I shall do what I think He would. What I shall do afterward will also depend on what Christ would do. I cannot decide it yet. I have great faith in the church on earth."

"And yet what has it done for you so far, Philip? The business men still own and rent the saloons and gambling houses. The money spent by the church is all of proportion to its wealth. Here you give away half your salary to build up the Kingdom of God, and more than a dozen men in Calvary who are worth fifty and a hundred dollars give less than a hundredth part in connection with the church. It makes my blood boil, Philip, to see how you are throwing your life away in these miserable tenements and wasting your appeals on a church that plainly does not intend to do, does not want to do, as Christ would have it. And I don't believe it ever will."

"I'm not so sure of that, Sarah," replied Philip cheerfully. "I believe I shall win them yet. The only thing that sometimes troubles me is, Am I doing just as Christ would do? Am I saying what He would say in this age of the world? There is one thing of which I am certain—I am trying to do just as I believe He would. The mistakes I make are those which spring from my failure to interpret His action right. And yet I do feel deep in me that if he were pastor of this church today He would do most of the things I have done. He would preach most of the truths I have proclaimed. Don't you think so, Sarah?"

"I don't know, Philip. Yes, I think in most things you have made an honest attempt to interpret Him."

"And in the matter of the sexton, Sarah, wouldn't Christ tell Calvary church that it should admit him to membership? Would he make any distinction of persons? If he were a Christian, thoroughly converted and wants to be baptized, and unite with Christ's body on earth, would Christ, as pastor, refuse him admission?"

"There is a great deal of race prejudice among the people. If you present the matter, Philip, I feel sure it will meet with great opposition."

"That is not the question with me, Sarah. The question is, would Christ tell Calvary church that it should admit him to membership? Would he make any distinction of persons? If he were a Christian, thoroughly converted and wants to be baptized, and unite with Christ's body on earth, would Christ,