

**CHARLES M.  
SHELDON**

THE CRUCIFIXION OF  
PHILIP STRONG

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**Sheldon C.**

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# Содержание

CHAPTER I	5
CHAPTER II	9
CHAPTER III	15
CHAPTER IV	19
CHAPTER V	23
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	28

# Charles M. Sheldon

## The Crucifixion of Philip Strong

### 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 door and called down the stairs, "Sarah, I wish you would come up here. I want your help."

"All right, Philip, I'll be up in a minute," responded a voice from below, and very soon the minister's wife came upstairs 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?"

Philip 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. PHILIP 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 two thousand dollars 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 WINTER, *Chairman of the Board of Trustees.*

"What do you think of that, Sarah?" asked Philip Strong, as he finished the letter.

"Two thousand dollars is twice as much as you are getting now, Philip."

"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 decent 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.

#### **CHAPEL HILL, CHURCH, ELMDALE**

#### **REV. PHILIP 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 centre 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 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, Philip, 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 Philip, 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 far 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."

"Now, Philip, I don't see why, in a choice of this kind, you don't do as you feel inclined to do, and accept the call that pleases you most. Why should ministers be doing what they ought instead of what they like? You never please yourself."

"Well, Sarah," replied Philip, good-naturedly, "this is the way of it. The church in Elmdale is in a University town. The atmosphere of the place is scholastic. You know I passed four years of student life there. With the exception of the schools, there are not a thousand people in the village, a quiet, sleepy, dull, retired, studious place. I love the memory of it. I could go there as the pastor of the Elmdale church and preach to an audience of college boys eight months in the year and to about eighty refined, scholarly people the rest of the time. I could indulge my taste for reading and writing and enjoy a quiet pastorate there to the end of my days."

"Then, Philip, I don't see why you don't reply to their call and tell them you will accept; and we will move at once to Elmdale, and live and die there. It is a beautiful place, and I am sure we could live very comfortably on the salary and the vacation. There is no vacation mentioned in the other call."

"But, on the other hand," continued the minister, almost as if he were alone and arguing with himself, and had not heard his wife's words, "on the other hand, there is Milton, a manufacturing town of fifty thousand people, mostly operatives. It is the centre of much that belongs to the stirring life of the times in which we live. The labor question is there in the lives of those operatives. There are seven churches of different denominations, to the best of my knowledge, all striving after popularity and power. There is much hard, stern work to be done in Milton, by the true Church of Christ, to apply His teachings to men's needs, and somehow I cannot help hearing a voice say, 'Philip Strong, go to Milton and work for Christ. Abandon your dream of a parish where you may indulge your love of scholarship in the quiet atmosphere of a University town, and plunge into the hard, disagreeable, but necessary work of this age, in the atmosphere of physical labor, where great questions are being discussed, and the masses are engrossed in the terrible struggle for liberty and home, where physical life thrusts itself out into society, trampling down the spiritual and intellectual, and demanding of the Church and the preacher the fighting powers of giants of God to restore in men's souls a more just proportion of the value of the life of man on earth.'

"So, you see, Sarah," the minister went on after a little pause, "I want to go to Elmdale, but the Lord probably wants me to go to Milton."

Mrs. Strong was silent. She had the utmost faith in her husband that he would do exactly what he knew he ought to do, when once he decided what it was. Philip Strong was also silent a moment. At last he said, "Don't you think so, Sarah?"

"I don't see how we can always tell exactly what the Lord wants us to do. How can you tell that He doesn't want you to go to Elmdale? Are there not great opportunities to influence young student life in a University town? Will not some one go to Elmdale and become pastor of that church?"

"No doubt there is a necessary work to be done there. The only question is, am I the one to do it, or is the call to Milton more imperative? The more I think of it, the more I am convinced that I must go to Milton."

"Then," said the minister's wife, rising suddenly and speaking with a mock seriousness that her husband fully understood, "I don't see why you called me up here to decide what you had evidently settled before you called me. Do you consider that fair treatment, sir? It will serve you right if those biscuits I put in the oven when you called me are fallen as completely as Babylon. And I will make you eat half a dozen of them, sir, to punish you. We cannot afford to waste anything these times."

"What," cried Philip, slyly, "not on \$2,000 a year! But I'll eat the biscuits. They can't possibly be any worse than those we had a week after we were married—the ones we bought from the bakery, you remember," Philip added, hastily.

"You saved yourself just in time, then," replied the minister's wife. She came close up to the desk and in a different tone, said, "Philip, you know I believe in you, don't you?"

"Yes," said Philip simply; "I am sure you do. I am impulsive and impractical, but heart and soul, and body and mind, I simply want to do the will of God. Is it not so?"

"I know it is," she said, "and if you go to Milton it will be because you want to do His will more than to please yourself."

"Yes. Then shall I answer the letter to-night?"

"Yes, if you have decided, with my help, of course."

"Of course, you foolish creature, you know I could not settle it without you. And as for the biscuits—"

"As for the biscuits," said the minister's wife, "they will be settled without me, too, if I don't go down and see to them." She hurried downstairs and Philip Strong, with a smile and a sigh, took up his pen and wrote replies to the two 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 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 candidating for a place), and so I suppose their church committee came up 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 working men, cursed with saloons, and black with coal smoke and unwashed humanity. The church is quite strong in membership. The Year Book gives it five hundred 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 sermonizer, 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 to set in motion 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 fifty thousand working men, half of them foreigners, a town with more than sixty saloons in full blast, a town with seven churches of many different 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 over-estimate 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 shrink 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. It almost kills me to know that I am criticised for all that I say and do. And yet I know that 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 some one is sure to become offended, and in the end dislike me. I think God never made a man with 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 complex thought of myself, and yet, dear chum, 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. And 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 inside.

Well, my wife is calling me down to tea. Let me know what you do. 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.

## CHAPTER II

Within a week, Philip Strong had moved to Milton, as the church wished him to occupy the pulpit at once. The parsonage was a well-planned house next the church, and his wife soon made everything look very homelike. The first Sunday evening after Philip preached in Milton, for the first time, he chatted with his wife over the events of the day as they sat before a cheerful open fire in the large grate. It was late in the fall and the nights were sharp and frosty.

"Are you tired to-night, Philip?" asked his wife.

"Yes, the day has been rather trying. Did you think I was nervous? Did I preach well?" Philip 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."

Philip was silent a moment. And his wife went on.

"I am sure we shall like it here, Philip; 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, Philip. 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, Philip," 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 Philip, 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 Philip'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, Philip?"

"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, Philip, 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 Philip, 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 to-night, Philip, 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 two hundred 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, Philip, that those people outside were in any need of your preaching?"

Philip 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."

"Philip, I am sure your work here will be blessed, don't you think so?"

"I know it will," replied Philip, 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 Philip Strong, but Christ in Philip Strong. To deny the power and worth of that incarnation was, to his mind, not humility, but treason.

The Sunday following, Philip 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 talks to suppose Christ Himself as the one speaking to modern society on its sins, its needs, its opportunities, its responsibilities, its every-day life. I shall try to be entirely loving and just and courageous in giving what I believe Christ Himself would give you, if He were the pastor of Calvary Church in Milton to-day. So, during these talks, I wish you would, with me, try to see if you think Christ would actually say what I shall say in His place. If Christ were in Milton to-day, I believe He would speak to us about a good many things in Milton, and He would speak very plainly, and in many cases He might seem to be severe. But it would be for our good. Of course I am but human in my weakness. I shall make mistakes. I shall probably say things Christ would not say. But always going to the source of all true help, the Spirit of Truth, I shall, as best a man may, speak as I truly believe Christ would if he were your pastor. These talks will be given on the first Sunday of every month. I cannot announce the subjects, for they will be chosen as the opportunities arise."

During the week Philip spent several hours of each day in learning the facts concerning the town. One of the first things he did was to buy an accurate map of the place. He hung it up on the wall of his study, and in after days found occasion to make good use of it. He spent his afternoons walking over the town. He noted with special interest and earnestness the great brick mills by the river, five enormous structures with immense chimneys, out of which poured great volumes of smoke. Something about the mills fascinated him. They seemed like monsters of some sort, grim, unfeeling, but terrible. As one walked by them he seemed to feel the throbbing of the hearts of live creatures. The unpainted tenements, ugly in their unfailing similarity, affected Philip with a sense of almost anger. He had a keen and truthful taste in matters of architecture, and those boxes of houses offended

every artistic and home-like feeling in him. Coming home one day past the tenements he found himself in an unknown street, and for the curiosity of it he undertook to count the saloons on the street in one block. There were over twelve. There was a policeman on the corner as Philip reached the crossing, and he inquired of the officer if he could tell him who owned the property in the block containing the saloons.

"I believe most of the houses belong to Mr. Winter, sir."

"Mr. William Winter?" asked Philip.

"Yes, I think that's his name. He is the largest owner in the Ocean Mill yonder."

Philip thanked the man and went on toward home. "William Winter!" he exclaimed. "Is it possible that man will accept a revenue from the renting of his property to these vestibules of hell? That man! One of the leading members in my church! Chairman of the board of trustees and a leading citizen of the place! It does not seem possible!"

But before the week was out Philip had discovered facts that made his heart burn with shame and his mind rouse with indignation. Property in the town which was being used for saloons, gambling-houses, and dens of wickedness, was owned in large part by several of the most prominent members of his church. There was no doubt of the fact. Philip, whose very nature was frankness itself, resolved to go to these men and have a plain talk with them about it. It seemed to him like a monstrous evil that a Christian believer, a church-member, should be renting his property to these dens of vice, and taking the money. He called on Mr. Winter; but he was out of town and would not be back until Saturday night. He went to see another member who was a large owner in one of the mills, and a heavy property owner. It was not a pleasant thing to do, but Philip boldly stated the precise reason for his call, and asked his member if it was true that he rented several houses in a certain block where saloons and gambling-houses were numerous. The man looked at Philip, turned red, and finally said it was a fact, but none of Philip's business.

"My dear brother," said Philip, with a sad but winning smile, "you cannot imagine what it costs me to come to you about this matter. In one sense, it may seem to you like an impertinent meddling in your business. In another sense, it is only what I ought to do as pastor of a church which is dearer to me than my life. And I have come to you as a brother in Christ to ask you if it seems to you like a thing which Christ would approve that you, His disciple, should allow the property which has come into your hands that you may use it for His glory and the building up of His kingdom, to be used by the agents of the devil while you reap the financial benefit. Is it right, my brother?"

The man to whom the question was put made the usual excuses, that if he did not rent to these people, other men would, that there was no call for the property by other parties, and if it were not rented to objectionable people it would lie empty at a dead loss, and so forth. To all of which Philip opposed the plain will of God, that all a man has should be used in clean and honest ways, and He could never sanction the getting of money through such immoral channels. The man was finally induced to acknowledge that it was not just the right thing to do, and especially for a church-member. But, when Philip pressed him to give up the whole iniquitous revenue, and clear himself of all connection with it, the property owner looked aghast.

"Why, Mr. Strong, do you know what you ask? Two-thirds of the most regular part of my income is derived from these rents. It is out of the question for me to give them up. You are too nice in the matter. All the property owners in Milton do the same thing. There isn't a man of any means in the church who isn't deriving some revenue from this source. Why, a large part of your salary is paid from these very rents. You will get into trouble if you try to meddle in this matter. I don't take offense. I think you have done your duty. And I confess it doesn't seem exactly the thing. But, as society is organized, I don't see as we can change the matter. Better not try to do anything about it, Mr. Strong. The church likes you, and will stand by in giving you a handsome support; but men are very touchy when their private business is meddled with."

Philip sat listening to this speech, and his face grew whiter and he clenched his hands tighter as the man went on. When he had finished, Philip spoke in a low voice:

"Mr. Bentley, you do not know me, if you think any fear of the consequences will prevent my speaking to the members of my church on any matter where it seems to me I ought to speak. In this particular matter, I believe it is not only my right, but my duty to speak. I would be shamed before my Lord and Master if I did not declare His will in regard to the uses of property. This question passes over from one of private business, with which I have no right to meddle, into the domain of public safety, where I have a right to demand that places which are fatal to the life and morals of the young men and women of the town, shall not be encouraged and allowed to subsist through the use of property owned and controlled by men of influence in the community, and especially by the members of Christ's body. My brother," Philip went on, after a painful pause, "before God, in whose presence we shall stand at last, am I not right in my view of this matter? Would not Christ say to you just what I am now saying?"

Mr. Bentley shrugged his shoulders and said something about not trying to mix up business and religion. Philip sat looking at the man, reading him through and through, his heart almost bursting in him at the thought of what a man would do for the sake of money. At last he saw that he would gain nothing by prolonging the argument. He rose, and with the same sweet frankness which characterized his opening of the subject, he said, "Brother, I wish to tell you that it is my intention to speak of this matter next Sunday, in the first of my talks on Christ and Modern Society. I believe it is something he would talk about in public, and I will speak of it as I think he would."

"You must do your duty, of course, Mr. Strong," replied Mr. Bentley, somewhat coldly; and Philip went out, feeling as if he had grappled with his first dragon in Milton, and found him to be a very ugly one and hard to kill. What hurt him as much as the lack of spiritual fineness of apprehension of evil in his church-member, was the knowledge that, as Mr. Bentley so coarsely put it, his salary was largely paid out of the rentals of those vile abodes. He grew sick at heart as he dwelt upon the disagreeable fact; and as he came back to the parsonage and went up to his cosy study, he groaned to think that it was possible through the price that men paid for souls.

"And this, because society is as it is!" he exclaimed, as he buried his face in his hands and leaned his elbows on his desk, while his cheeks flushed and his heart quivered at the thought of the filth and vileness the money had seen and heard which paid for the very desk at which he wrote his sermons.

But Philip Strong was not one to give way at the first feeling of seeming defeat. He did not too harshly condemn his members. He wondered at their lack of spiritual life; but, to his credit be it said, he did not harshly condemn. Only, as Sunday approached, he grew more clear in his own mind as to his duty in the matter. Expediency whispered to him, "Better wait. You have only just come here. The people like you now. It will only cause unpleasant feelings and do no good for you to launch out into a crusade against this thing right now. There are so many of your members involved that it will certainly alienate their support, and possibly lead to your being compelled to lose your place as pastor, if it do not drive away the most influential members."

To all this plea of expediency Philip replied, "Get thee behind me, Satan!" He said with himself, he might as well let the people know what he was at the very first. It was not necessary that he should be their pastor, if they would none of him. It was necessary that he preach the truth boldly. The one question he asked himself was, "Would Jesus Christ, if he were pastor of Cavalry[sic] Church in Milton to-day, speak of the matter next Sunday, and speak regardless of all consequences?" Philip asked the question honestly; and, after long prayer and much communion with the Divine, he said, "Yes, I believe he would." It is possible that he might have gained by waiting or by working with his members in private. Another man might have pursued that method, and still have been a courageous, true minister. But this is the story of Philip Strong, not of another man, and this is what he did.

When Sunday morning came, he went into his pulpit with the one thought in mind, that he would simply and frankly, in his presentation of the subject, use the language and the spirit of his

Master. He had seen other property owners during the week, and his interviews were nearly all similar to the one with Mr. Bentley. He had not been able to see Mr. William Winter, the chairman of the trustees, as he had not returned home until very late Saturday night. Philip saw him come into the church that morning, just as the choir rose to sing the anthem. He was a large, fine-looking man. Philip admired his physical appearance as he marched down the aisle to his pew, which was the third from the front, directly before the pulpit.

When the hymn had been sung, the offering taken, the prayer made, Philip stepped out at one side of the pulpit and reminded the congregation that, according to his announcement of a week before, he would give the first of his series of monthly talks on Christ and Modern Society. His subject this morning, he said, was "The Right and Wrong Uses of Property."

He started out with the statement, which he claimed was verified everywhere in the word of God, that all property that men acquire is really only in the nature of trust funds, which the property holder is in duty bound to use as a steward. The gold is God's. The silver is God's. The cattle on a thousand hills. All land and water privileges and wealth of the earth and of the seas belong primarily to the Lord of all the earth. When any of this property comes within the control of a man, he is not at liberty to use it as if it were his own, and his alone, but as God would have him use it, to better the condition of life, and make men and communities happier and more useful.

From this statement Philip went on to speak of the common idea which men had, that wealth and houses and lands were their own, to do with as they pleased; and he showed what misery and trouble had always flowed out of this great falsehood, and how nations and individuals were to-day in the greatest distress, because of the wrong uses to which God's property was put by men who had control of it. It was easy then to narrow the argument to the condition of affairs in Milton. As he stepped from the general to the particular, and began to speak of the rental of saloons and houses of gambling from property owners in Milton, and then characterized such a use of God's property as wrong and unchristian, it was curious to note the effect on the congregation. Men who had been listening complacently to Philip's eloquent but quiet statements, as long as he confined himself to distant historical facts, suddenly became aware that the tall, palefaced, resolute and loving young preacher up there was talking right at them; and more than one mill-owner, merchant, real estate dealer, and even professional man, writhed inwardly[sic], and nervously shifted in his cushioned pew, as Philip spoke in the plainest terms of the terrible example set the world by the use of property for purposes which were destructive to all true society, and a shame to civilization and Christianity. Philip controlled his voice and his manner admirably, but he drove the truth home and spared not. His voice at no time rose above a quiet conversational tone, but it was clear and distinct. The audience sat hushed in the spell of a genuine sensation, which deepened when, at the close of a tremendous sentence, which swept through the church like a red-hot flame, Mr. Winter suddenly arose in his pew, passed out into the aisle, and marched deliberately down and out of the door. Philip saw him and knew the reason, but marched straight on with his message, and no one, not even his anxious wife, who endured martyrdom for him that morning, could detect any disturbance in Philip from the mill-owner's contemptuous withdrawal.

When Philip closed with a prayer of tender appeal that the Spirit of Truth would make all hearts to behold the truth as one soul, the audience remained seated longer than usual, still under the influence of the subject and the morning's sensational service. All through the day Philip felt a certain strain on him, which did not subside even when the evening service was over. Some of the members, notably several of the mothers, thanked him, with tears in their eyes, for his morning message. Very few of the men talked with him. Mr. Winter did not come out to the evening service, although he was one of the very few men members who were invariably present. Philip noted his absence, but preached with his usual enthusiasm. He thought a larger number of strangers was present than he had seen the Sunday before. He was very tired when the day was over.

The next morning, as he was getting ready to go out for a visit to one of the mills, the bell rang. He was near the door and opened it. There stood Mr. Winter. "I would like to see you a few moments, Mr. Strong, if you can spare the time," said the mill-owner, without offering to take the hand Philip extended.

"Certainly. Will you come up to my study?" asked Philip, quietly.

The two men went upstairs, and Philip shut the door, as he motioned Mr. Winter to a seat, and then sat down opposite.

## CHAPTER III

"I have come to see you about your sermon of yesterday morning," began Mr. Winter, abruptly. "I consider what you said was a direct insult to me personally."

"Suppose I should say it was not so intended," replied Philip, with a good-natured smile.

"Then I should say you lied!" replied Mr. Winter, sharply.

Philip sat very still. And the two men eyed each other in silence for a moment. The minister reached out his hand, and laid it on the other's arm, saying as he did so, "My brother, you certainly did not come into my house to accuse me unjustly of wronging you? I am willing to talk the matter over in a friendly spirit, but I will not listen to personal abuse."

There was something in the tone and manner of this declaration that subdued the mill-owner a little. He was an older man than Philip by twenty years, but a man of quick and ungoverned temper. He had come to see the minister while in a heat of passion, and the way Philip received him, the calmness and dignity of his attitude, thwarted his purpose. He wanted to find a man ready to quarrel. Instead he found a man ready to talk reason. Mr. Winter replied, after a pause, during which he controlled himself by a great effort:

"I consider that you purposely selected me as guilty of conduct unworthy a church-member and a Christian, and made me the target of your remarks yesterday. And I wish to say that such preaching will never do in Calvary Church while I am one of its members."

"Of course you refer to the matter of renting your property to saloon men and to halls for gambling and other evil uses," said Philip, bluntly. "Are you the only member of Calvary Church who lets his property for such purposes?"

"It is not a preacher's business to pry into the affairs of his church-members!" replied Mr. Winter, growing more excited again. "That is what I object to."

"In the first place, Mr. Winter," said Philip, steadily, "let us settle the right and wrongs of the whole business. Is it right for a Christian man, a church-member, to rent his property for saloons and vicious resorts, where human life is ruined?"

"That is not the question."

"What is?" Philip asked, with his eyes wide open to the other's face.

Mr. Winter answered sullenly: "The question is whether our business affairs, those of other men with me, are to be dragged into the Sunday church-services, and made the occasion of personal attacks upon us. I for one will not sit and listen to any such preaching."

"But aside from the matter of private business, Mr. Winter, let us settle whether what you and others are doing is right. Will you let the other matter rest a moment, and tell me what is the duty of a Christian in the use of his property?"

"It is my property, and if I or my agent choose to rent it to another man in a legal, business way, that is my affair. I do not recognize that you have anything to do with it."

"Not if I am convinced that you are doing what is harmful to the community and to the church?"

"You have no business to meddle in our private affairs!" replied Mr. Winter, angrily. "And if you intend to pursue that method of preaching, I shall withdraw my support, and most of the influential, paying members will follow my example."

It was a cowardly threat on the part of the excited mill-owner, and it roused Philip more than if he had been physically slapped in the face. If there was anything in all the world that stirred Philip to his oceanic depths of feeling, it was an intimation that he was in the ministry for pay or the salary, and so must be afraid of losing the support of those members who were able to pay largely. He clenched his fingers around the arms of his study-chair until his nails bent on the hard wood. His scorn and indignation burned in his face, although his voice was calm enough.

"Mr. Winter, this whole affair is a matter of the most profound principle with me. As long as I live I shall believe that a Christian man has no more right to rent his property for a saloon than he has to run a saloon himself. And as long as I live I shall also believe that it is a minister's duty to preach to his church plainly upon matters which bear upon the right and wrong of life, no matter what is involved in those matters. Are money and houses and lands of such a character that the use of them has no bearing on moral questions, and they are therefore to be left out of the preaching material of the pulpit? It is my conviction that many men of property in this age are coming to regard their business as separate and removed from God and all relation to Him. The business men of to-day do not regard their property as God's. They always speak of it as theirs. And they resent any 'interference,' as you call it, on the part of the pulpit. Nevertheless, I say it plainly, I regard the renting of these houses by you, and other business men in the church, to the whisky men and the corrupters of youth as wholly wrong, and so wrong that the Christian minister who would keep silent when he knew the facts would be guilty of unspeakable cowardice and disloyalty to his Lord. As to your threat of withdrawal of support, sir, do you suppose I would be in the ministry if I were afraid of the rich men in my congregation? It shows that you are not yet acquainted with me. It would not hurt you to know me better!"

All the time Philip was talking, his manner was that of dignified indignation. His anger was never coarse or vulgar. But when he was roused as he was now he spoke with a total disregard for all coming consequences. For the time being he felt as perhaps one of the old Hebrew prophets used to feel when the flame of inspired wrath burned up in the soul of the messenger of God.

The man who sat opposite was compelled to keep silent until Philip had said what he had to say. It was impossible for him to interrupt. Also it was out of the question that a man like Mr. Winter should understand a nature like that of Philip Strong. The mill-owner sprang to his feet as soon as Philip finished. He was white to the lips with passion, and so excited that his hands trembled and his voice shook as he replied to Philip:

"You shall answer for these insults, sir. I withdraw my church pledge, and you will see whether the business men in the church will sustain such preaching." And Mr. Winter flung himself out of the study and downstairs, forgetting to take his hat, which he had carried up with him. Philip caught it up and went downstairs with it, reaching him just as he was going out of the front door. He said simply, "You forgot your hat, sir." Mr. Winter took it without a word and went out, slamming the door hard behind him.

Philip turned around, and there stood his wife. Her face was very anxious.

"Tell me all about it, Philip," she said. Sunday evening they had talked over the fact of Mr. Winter's walking out of the church during the service, and had anticipated some trouble. Philip related the facts of Mr. Winter's visit, telling his wife some things the mill-owner had said.

"What did you say, Philip, to make him so angry? Did you give him a piece of your mind?"

"I gave him the whole of it," replied Philip, somewhat grimly—"at least all of it on that particular subject that he could stand."

"Oh, dear! It seems too bad to have this trouble come so soon! What will Mr. Winter do? He is very wealthy and influential. Do you think—are you sure that in this matter you have done just right, just for the best, Philip? It is going to be very unpleasant for you."

"Well, Sarah, I would not do differently from what I have done. What have I done? I have simply preached God's truth, as I plainly see it, to my church. And if I do not do that, what business have I in the ministry at all? I regret this personal encounter with Mr. Winter; but I don't see how I could avoid it."

"Did you lose your temper?"

"No."

"There was some very loud talking. I could hear it away out in the kitchen."

"Well, you know, Sarah, the more indignant I get the less inclined I feel to 'holler.' It was Mr. Winter you heard. He was very much excited when he came, and nothing that I could conscientiously say would have made any difference with him."

"Did you ask him to pray over the matter with you?"

"No. I do not think he was in a praying mood."

"Were you?"

Philip hesitated a moment, and then replied seriously: "Yes, I truly believe I was—that is, I should not have been ashamed at any part of the interview to put myself into loving communion with my Heavenly Father."

Mrs. Strong still looked disturbed and anxious. She was going over in her mind the probable result of Mr. Winter's antagonism to the minister. It looked to her like a very serious thing. Philip was inclined to treat the affair with calm philosophy, based on the knowledge that his conscience was clear of all fault in the matter.

"What do you suppose Mr. Winter will do?" Mrs. Strong asked.

"He threatened to withdraw his financial support, and said other paying members would do the same."

"Do you think they will?"

"I don't know. I shouldn't wonder if they do."

"What will you do then? It will be dreadful to have a disturbance in the church of this kind, Philip; it will ruin your prospects here. You will not be able to work under all that friction."

And the minister's wife suddenly broke down and had a good cry; while Philip comforted her, first by saying two or three funny things, and secondly by asserting, with a positive cheerfulness which was peculiar to him when he was hard pressed, that, even if the church withdrew all support, he (Philip) could probably get a job somewhere on a railroad, or in a hotel, where there was always a demand for porters who could walk up several flights of stairs with a good-sized trunk.

"Sometimes I almost think I missed my calling," said Philip, purposely talking about himself in order to make his wife come to the defense. "I ought to have been a locomotive fireman."

"The idea, Philip Strong! A man who has the gift of reaching people with preaching the way you do!"

"The way I reach Mr. Winter, for example!"

"Yes," said his wife, "the way you reach him. Why, the very fact that you made such a man angry is pretty good proof that you reached him. Such men are not touched by any ordinary preaching."

"So you really think I have a little gift at preaching?" asked Philip, slyly.

"A little gift! It is a great deal more than a little, Philip."

"Aren't you a little prejudiced, Sarah?"

"No, sir. I am the severest critic you ever have in the congregation. If you only knew how nervous you sometimes make me!—when you get started on some exciting passage and make a gesture that would throw a stone image into a fit, and then begin to speak of something in a different way, like another person, and the first I know I am caught up and hurled into the subject, and forget all about you."

"Thank you," said Philip.

"What for?" asked his wife, laughing. "For forgetting you?"

"I would rather be forgotten by you than remembered by any one else," replied Philip, gallantly. "And you are such a delightful little flatterer that I feel courage for anything that may happen."

"It's not flattery; it's truth, Philip. I do believe in you and your work; and I am only anxious that you should succeed here. I can't bear to think of trouble in the church. It would almost kill me to go through such times as we sometimes read about."

"We must leave results to God. I am sure we are not responsible for more than our utmost doing and living of necessary truth." Philip spoke courageously.

"Then you don't feel disheartened by this morning's work?"

"No, I don't know that I do. I'm very sensitive, and I feel hurt at Mr. Winter's threat of withdrawing his support; but I don't feel disheartened for the work. Why should I? Am I not doing my best?"

"I believe you are. Only, dear Philip, be wise. Do not try to reform everything in a week, or expect people to grow their wings before they have started even pin-feathers. It isn't natural."

"Well, I won't," replied Philip, with a laugh. "Better trim your wings, Sarah; they're dragging on the floor."

He hunted up his hat, which was one of the things Philip could never find twice in the same place, kissed his wife, and went out to make the visit at the mill which he was getting ready to make when Mr. Winter called.

To his surprise, when he went down through the business part of the town, he discovered that his sermon of Sunday had roused almost every one. People were talking about it on the street—an almost unheard-of thing in Milton. When the evening paper came out it described in sensational paragraphs the Reverend Mr. Strong's attack on the wealthy sinners of his own church, and went on to say that the church "was very much wrought up over the sermon, and would probably make it uncomfortable for the reverend gentleman." Philip wondered, as he read, at the unusual stir made because a preacher of Christ had denounced an undoubted evil.

"Is it, then," he asked himself, "such a remarkable piece of news that a minister of the gospel has preached from his own pulpit against what is without question an unchristian use of property? What is the meaning of the church in society unless it is just that? Is it possible that the public is so little accustomed to hear anything on this subject that when they do hear it it is in the nature of sensational news?"

He pondered over these questions as he quietly but rapidly went along with his work. He was conscious as the days went on that trouble was brewing for him. This hurt him in a way hard to explain; but his sensitive spirit felt the cut like a lash on a sore place.

When Sunday came he went into his pulpit and faced the largest audience he had yet seen in Calvary Church. As is often the case, people who had heard of his previous sermon on Sunday thought he would preach another like it again. Instead of that he preached a sermon on the love of God for the world. In one way the large audience was disappointed. It had come to have its love of sensation fed, and Philip had not given it anything of the kind. In another way it was profoundly moved by the power and sweetness of Philip's unfolding of the great subject. Men who had not been inside of a church for years went away thoughtfully impressed with the old truth of God's love, and asked themselves what they had done to deserve it—the very thing that Philip wanted them to ask. The property owners in the church who had felt offended by Philip's sermon of the Sunday before went away from the service acknowledging that the new pastor was an eloquent preacher and a man of large gifts. In the evening Philip preached again from the same theme, using it in an entirely different way. His audience nearly filled the church, and was evidently deeply impressed.

In spite of all this, Philip felt that a certain element in the church had arrayed itself against him. Mr. Winter did not appear at either service. There were certain other absences on the part of men who had been constant attendants on the Sunday services. He felt, without hearing it, that a great deal was being said in opposition to him; but, with the burden of it beginning to wear a little on him, he saw nothing better to do than to go on with his work as if nothing unusual had taken place.

## CHAPTER IV

Pursuing the plan he had originally mapped out when he came to Milton, he spent much of his time in the afternoons studying the social and civic life of the town. As the first Sunday of the next month drew near, when he was to speak again on the attitude of Christ to some aspect of modern society, he determined to select the saloon as one of the prominent features of modern life that would naturally be noticed by Christ, and doubtless be denounced by him as a great evil.

In his study of the saloon question he did a thing which he had never done before, and then only after very much deliberation and prayer. He went into the saloons themselves on different occasions. He had never done such a thing before. He wanted to know from actual knowledge what sort of places the saloons were. What he saw after a dozen visits to as many different grogeries added fuel to the flame of indignation that burned already hot in him. The sight of the vast army of men turning into beasts in these dens created in him a loathing and a hatred of the whole iniquitous institution that language failed to express. He wondered with unspeakable astonishment in his soul that a civilized community in the nineteenth century would tolerate for one moment the public sale of an article that led, on the confession of society itself, to countless crimes against the law of the land and of God. His indignant astonishment deepened yet more, if that were possible, when he found that the license of five hundred dollars a year for each saloon was used by the town to support the public school system. That, to Philip's mind, was an awful sarcasm on Christian civilization. It seemed to him like selling a man poison according to law, and then taking the money from the sale to help the widow to purchase mourning. It was full as ghastly as that would be.

He went to see some of the other ministers, hoping to unite them in a combined attack on the saloon power. It seemed to him that, if the Church as a whole entered the crusade against the saloon, it could be driven out even from Milton, where it had been so long established. To his surprise he found the other churches unwilling to unite in a public battle against the whisky men. Several of the ministers openly defended license as the only practicable method of dealing with the saloon. All of them confessed it was evil, and only evil, but under the circumstances thought it would do little good to agitate the subject. Philip came away from several interviews with the ministers, sad and sick at heart.

He approached several of the prominent men in the town, hoping to enlist some of them in the fight against the rum power. Here he met with an unexpected opposition, coming in a form he had not anticipated. One prominent citizen said:

"Mr. Strong, you will ruin your chances here if you attack the saloons in this savage manner; and I'll tell you why: The whisky men hold a tremendous influence in Milton in the matter of political power. The city election comes off the middle of next month. The men up for office are dependent for election on the votes of the saloon men and their following. You will cut your head off sure if you come out against them in public. Why, there's Mr. —, and so on (he named half a dozen men) in your church who are up for office in the coming election. They can't be elected without the votes of the rummies, and they know it. Better steer clear of it, Mr. Strong. The saloon has been a regular thing in Milton for over fifty years; it is as much a part of the town as the churches or schools; and I tell you it is a power!"

"What!" cried Philip, in unbounded astonishment, "do you tell me, you, a leading citizen of this town of 50,000 infinite souls, that the saloon power has its grip to this extent on the civic and social life of the place, and you are willing to sit down and let this devil of crime and ruin throttle you, and not raise a finger to expel the monster? Is it possible! It is not Christian America that such a state of affairs in our political life should be endured!"

"Nevertheless," replied the business man, "these are the facts. And you will simply dash your own life out against a wall of solid rock if you try to fight this evil. You have my warning."

"May I not also have your help!" cried Philip, hungry of soul for companionship in the struggle which he saw was coming.

"It would ruin my business to come out against the saloon," replied the man, frankly.

"And what is that?" cried Philip, earnestly. "It has already ruined far more than ought to be dear to you. Man, man, what are money and business compared with your own flesh and blood? Do you know where your own son was two nights ago? In one of the vilest of the vile holes in this city, where you, a father, license to another man to destroy the life of your own child! I saw him there myself; and my heart ached for him and you. It is the necessary truth. Will you not join with me to wipe out this curse in society?"

The merchant trembled and his lips quivered at mention of his son, but he replied:

"I cannot do what you want, Mr. Strong. But you can count on my sympathy if you make the fight." Philip finally went away, his soul tossed on a wave of mountain proportions, and growing more and more crested with foam and wrath as the first Sunday of the month drew near, and he realized that the battle was one that he must wage single-handed in a town of fifty thousand people.

He was not so destitute of support as he thought. There were many mothers' hearts in Milton that had ached and prayed in agony long years that the Almighty would come with his power and sweep the curse away. But Philip had not been long enough in Milton to know the entire sentiment of the people. He had so far touched only the Church, through its representative pulpits, and a few of the leading business men, and the result had been almost to convince him that very little help could be expected from the public generally. He was appalled to find out what a tremendous hold the whisky men had on the business and politics of the place. It was a revelation to him of their power. The whole thing seemed to him like a travesty of free government, and a terrible commentary on the boasted Christianity of the century.

So when he walked into the pulpit the first Sunday of the month he felt his message burning in his heart and on his lips as never before. It seemed beyond all question that if Christ was pastor of Calvary Church he would speak out in plain denunciation of the whisky power. And so, after the opening part of the service, Philip rose to speak, facing an immense audience that overflowed the galleries and invaded the choir and even sat upon the pulpit platform. Such a crowd had never been seen in Calvary Church before.

Philip had not announced his subject, but there was an expectation on the part of many that he was going to denounce the saloon. In the two months that he had been preaching in Milton he had attracted great attention. His audience this morning represented a great many different kinds of people. Some came out of curiosity. Others came because the crowd was going that way. So it happened that Philip faced a truly representative audience of Milton people. As his eye swept over the house he saw four of the six members of his church who were up for office at the coming election in two weeks.

For an hour Philip spoke as he had never spoken in all his life before. His subject, the cause it represented, the immense audience, the entire occasion caught him up in a genuine burst of eloquent fury, and his sermon swept through the house like a prairie fire driven by a high gale. At the close, he spoke of the power of the Church compared with the saloon, and showed how easily it could win the victory against any kind of evil if it were only united and determined.

"Men and women of Milton, fathers, mothers and citizens," he said, "this evil is one which cannot be driven out unless the Christian people of this place unite to condemn it and fight it, regardless of results. It is too firmly established. It has its clutch on business, the municipal life, and even the Church itself. It is a fact that the Church in Milton have been afraid to take the right stand in this matter. Members of the churches have become involved in the terrible entanglement of the long-established rum-power, until to-day you witness a condition of affairs which ought to stir the righteous indignation of every citizen and father. What is it you are enduring? An institution which blasts with its poisonous breath every soul that enters it, which ruins young manhood, which kills more

citizens in times of peace than the most bloody war ever slew in times of revolution; an institution that has not one good thing to commend it; an institution that is established for the open and declared purpose of getting money from the people by the sale of stuff that creates criminals; an institution that robs the honest workingman of his savings, and looks with indifference on the tears of the wife, the sobs of the mother; an institution that never gives one cent of its enormous wealth to build churches, colleges, or homes for the needy; an institution that has the brand of the murderer, the harlot, the gambler burned into it with a brand of the Devil's own forging in the furnace of his hottest hell—this institution so rules and governs this town of Milton to-day that honest citizens tremble before it, business men dare not oppose it for fear of losing money, church-members fawn before it in order to gain place in politics, and ministers of the gospel confront its hideous influence and say nothing! It is high time we faced this monster of iniquity and drove it out of the stronghold it has occupied so long.

"I wish you could have gone with me this past week and witnessed some of the sights I have seen. No! I retract that statement. I would not wish that any father or mother had had the heartache that I have felt as I contemplated the ruins of young lives crumbling into the decay of premature debility, mocking the manhood that God gave them, in the intoxicating curse of debauchery. What have I seen? Oh ye fathers! O ye mothers! Do you know what is going on in this place of sixty saloons licensed by your own act and made legal by your own will? You, madam, and you, sir, who have covenanted together in the fellowship and discipleship of the purest institution of God on earth, who have sat here in front of this pulpit and partaken of the emblems which remind you of your Redeemer, where are your sons, your brothers, your lovers, your friends? They are not here this morning. The Church does not have any hold on them. They are growing up to disregard the duties of good citizenship. They are walking down the broad avenue of destruction, and what is this town doing to prevent it? I have seen young men from what are called the best homes in this town reel in and out of gilded temples of evil, oaths on their lips and passion in their looks, and the cry of my soul has gone up to Almighty God that the Church and the Home might combine their mighty force to drive the whisky demon out of our municipal life so that we might feel the curse of it again nevermore.

"I speak to you to-day in the name of my Lord and Master. It is impossible for me to believe that if that Christ of God were standing here this morning he would advise the licensing of this corruption as the most feasible or expedient method of dealing with it. I cannot imagine him using the argument that the saloon must be licensed for the revenue that may be gained from it to support the school system. I cannot imagine Christ taking any other position before the whisky power than that of uncompromising condemnation. He would say it was evil and only evil, and therefore to be opposed by every legal and moral restriction that society could rear against it. In his name, speaking as I believe he would speak if he were here this moment, I solemnly declare the necessity on the part of every disciple of Christ in every church in Milton of placing himself decidedly and persistently and at once in open battle against the saloon until it is destroyed, until its power in business, politics, and society is a thing of the past, until we have rid ourselves of the foul vapor which has so many years trailed its slimy folds through our homes and our schools.

"Citizens, Christians, church-members, I call on you to-day to take up arms against the common foe of that we hold dear in church, home, and state. I know there are honest business men who have long writhed in secret at the ignominy of the halter about their necks by which they have been led. There are citizens who have the best interests of the community at heart who have hung their heads in shame of American politics, seeing this brutal whisky element dictating the government of the towns, and parcelling out their patronage and managing their funds and enormous stealings of the people's money. I know there are church-members who have felt in their hearts the deep shame of bowing the knee to this rum god in order to make advancement in political life. And I call on all these to-day to rise with me and begin a fight against the entire saloon business and whisky rule in Milton until by the help of the Lord of hosts we have gotten us the victory. Men, women, brothers, sisters in the great family of God on earth, will you sit tamely down and worship the great beast of this country!

Will you not rather gird your swords upon your thighs and go out to battle against this blasphemous Philistine who has defied the armies of the living God? I have spoken my message. Let us ask the wisdom and power of the Divine to help us."

Philip's prayer was almost painful in its intensity of feeling and expression. The audience sat in deathly silence, and when he pronounced the amen of the benediction it was several moments before any one stirred to leave the church.

Philip went home completely exhausted. He had put into his sermon all of himself and had called up all his reserve power—a thing he was not often guilty of doing, and for which he condemned himself on this occasion. But it was past, and he could not recall it. He was not concerned as to the results of his sermon. He had long believed that if he spoke the message God gave him he was not to grow anxious over the outcome of it.

But the people of Milton were deeply stirred by the address. They were not in the habit of hearing that kind of preaching. And what was more, the whisky element was roused. It was not in the habit of having its authority attacked in that bold, almost savage manner. For years its sway had been undisturbed. It had insolently established itself in power until even these citizens who knew its thoroughly evil character were deceived into the belief that nothing better than licensing it was possible. The idea that the saloon could be banished, removed, driven out altogether, had never before been advocated in Milton. The conviction that whether it could be it ought to be suppressed had never gained ground with any number of people. They had endured it as a necessary evil. Philip's sermon, therefore, fell something like a bomb into the whisky camp. Before night the report of the sermon had spread all over the town. The saloon men were enraged. Ordinarily they would have paid no attention to anything a church or a preacher might say or do. But Philip spoke from the pulpit of the largest church in Milton. The whisky men knew that if the large churches should all unite to fight them they would make it very uncomfortable for them and in the end probably drive them out. Philip went home that Sunday night after the evening service with several bitter enemies. The whisky men contributed one element. Some of his own church-members made up another. He had struck again at the same sore spot which he had wounded the month before. In his attack on the saloon as an institution he had again necessarily condemned all those members of his church who rented property to the whisky element. Again, as a month ago, these property holders went from the hearing of the sermon angry that they as well as the saloon power were under indictment.

As Philip entered on the week's work after that eventful sermon he began to feel the pressure of public feeling against him. He began to realize the bitterness of championing a just cause alone. He felt the burden of the community's sin in the matter, and more than once he felt obliged to come in from his parish work and go up into his study there to commune with his Father. He was growing old very fast in these first few weeks in his new parish.

Tuesday evening of that week Philip had been writing a little while in his study, where he had gone immediately after supper. It was nearly eight o'clock when he happened to remember that he had promised a sick child in the home of one of his parishioners that he would come and see him that very day.

He came downstairs, put on his hat and overcoat, and told his wife where he was going.

"It's not far. I shall be back in about half an hour, Sarah."

He went out, and his wife held the door open until he was down the steps. She was just on the point of shutting the door as he started down the sidewalk when a sharp report rang out close by. She screamed and flung the door open again, as by the light of the street lamp she saw Philip stagger and then leap into the street toward an elm-tree which grew almost opposite the parsonage. When he was about in the middle of the street she was horrified to see a man step out boldly from behind the tree, raise a gun, and deliberately fire at Philip again. This time Philip fell and did not rise. His tall form lay where the rays of the street lamp shone on it and he had fallen so that as his arms stretched out there he made the figure of a huge and prostrate cross.

## 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 fifty years one of the most brutal and cowardly institutions on earth, and licensing 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. O 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 ten 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 which lasted several hours, 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 to receive a few visitors. Among them was the chief of police, who came to inquire concerning the identity of the man who had done the shooting. Philip showed some reluctance to witness against his enemy. It was only when he remembered that he owed a duty to society as well as to himself that he described the man and related minutely the entire affair exactly as it occurred.

"Is the man in town?" asked Philip. "Has he not fled?"

"I think I know where he is," replied the officer. "He's in hiding, but I can find him. In fact, we have been hunting for him since the shooting. He is wanted on several other charges."

Philip was pondering something in silence. At last he said:

"When you have arrested him I wish you would bring him here if it can be done without violating any ordinance or statute."

The officer stared at the request, and the minister's wife exclaimed: "Philip, you will not have that man come into the house! Besides, you are not well enough to endure a meeting with the wretch!"

"Sarah, I have a good reason for it. Really, I am well enough. You will bring him, won't you? I do not wish to make any mistake in the matter. Before the man is really confined under a criminal charge of attempt to murder I would like to confront him here. There can be no objection to that, can there?"

The officer finally promised that, if he could do so without attracting too much attention, he would comply with the request. It was a thing he had never done before; he was not quite easy in his mind about it. Nevertheless, Philip exercised a winning influence over all sorts and conditions of men, and he felt quite sure that, if the officer could arrest his man quietly, he would bring him to the parsonage.

This was Thursday night. The next evening, just after dark, the bell rang, and one of the church members who had been staying with Mr. Strong during the day went to the door. There stood two men. One of them was the chief of police. He inquired how the minister was, and said that he had a man with him whom the minister was anxious to see.

Philip heard them talking, and guessed who they were. He sent his wife out to have the men come in. The officer with his man came into the bedroom where Philip lay, still weak and suffering, but at his request propped up a little with pillows.

"Well, Mr. Strong, I have got the man, and here he is." said the officer, wondering what Philip could want of him. "I ran him down in the 'crow's nest' below the mills, and we popped him into a hack and drove right up here with him. And a pretty sweet specimen he is, I can tell you! Take off your hat and let the gentleman have another look at the brave chap who fired at him in ambush!"

The officer spoke almost brutally, forgetting for a moment that the prisoner's hands were manacled; remembering it the next instant, he pulled off the man's hat, while Philip looked calmly at the features. Yes, it was the same hideous, brutal face, with the hare-lip, which had shone up in the rays of the street-lamp that night; there was no mistaking it for any other.

"Why did you want to kill me?" asked Philip, after a significant pause.

"I never did you any harm."

"I would like to kill all the cursed preachers," replied the man, hoarsely.

"You confess, then, that you are the man who fired at me, do you?"

"I don't confess anything. What are you talking to me for? Take me to the lock-up if you're going to!" the man exclaimed fiercely, turning to the officer.

"Philip!" cried his wife, turning to him with a gesture of appeal, "send them away. It will do no good to talk to this man."

Philip raised his hand in a gesture toward the man that made every one in the room feel a little awed. The officer in speaking of it afterward said: "I tell you, boys I never felt quite the same, except once, when the old Catholic priest stepped up on the platform with old man Gower time he was hanged at Millville. Somehow then I felt as if, when the priest raised his hand and began to pray, maybe we might all be glad to have some one pray for us if we get into a tight place."

Philip spoke directly to the man, whose look fell beneath that of the minister.

"You know well enough that you are the man who shot me Tuesday night. I know you are the man, for I saw your face very plainly by the light of the street-lamp. Now, all that I wanted to see you here for before you were taken to jail was to let you know that I do not bear any hatred toward you. The thing you have done is against the law of God and man. The injury you have inflicted upon me is very slight compared with that against your own soul. Oh, my brother man, why should you try to harm me because I denounced your business? Do you not know in your heart of hearts that the saloon is so evil in its effects that a man who 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 thy purity and holiness and affection. Oh, my God, thou who didst come in the likeness of sinful man 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, enfolding 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 to-morrow. 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 to-morrow! He's that stubborn that I don't know as 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 a while. 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 lied 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 Master'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 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 wound healed 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 by an unexpected manner by an event which did more than anything else to hasten his recovery. He was still confined to bed downstairs 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 Saturday in my Western parish, and I was just in the throes of packing up to come on to Elmdale."

"Elmdale?"

"Yes, I've had a call there. So we shall be neighbors. Mrs. Burke is up there now getting the house straightened out, and I came right down here."

"So you are pastor of the Chapel Hill Church? It's a splendid opening for a young preacher. Congratulations, Alfred."

"Thank you, Philip. By the way, I saw by the paper that you had declined a call to Elmdale, so I suppose they pitched on me for a second choice. You never wrote me of their call to you," he said, a little reproachfully.

"It didn't occur to me," replied Philip, truthfully. "But how are you going to like it? Isn't it rather a dull old place?"

"Yes, I suspect it is, compared with Milton. I suppose you couldn't live without the excitement of dodging assassins and murderers every time you go out to prayer meeting or make parish calls. How do you like your work so far?"

"There is plenty of it," answered Philip, gravely. "A minister must be made of cast-iron and fire-brick in order to stand the wear and tear of these times in which we live. I'd like a week to trade ideas with you and talk over the work, Alfred."

"You'd get the worst of the bargain."

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

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

"Done," said Philip, with a grin; and just then Mrs. Strong forbade any more talk. Alfred stayed 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.

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