

THE CRUCIFIXION OF PHILLIP STRONG.*

BY CHARLES M. SHELDON.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS I. AND II.

This vigorously-written story begins with the receipt of two invitations by Phillip Strong, one to the Calvary Church at Milton, a manufacturing city with eighty thousand people, many of them being of foreign birth, and eighty saloons; the other, to a small university town, which promised learned leisure and long vacations. He accepts the former as the call of God and as affording the greatest opportunity for usefulness. He finds the city of Milton ruled by a defiant and aggressive saloon element, and much of its saloon property owned by professing Christians, some of them of his own church. Phillip Strong remonstrates personally with these people, and then begins a series of sermons on Christ and the Modern Society, in which he denounces the saloons and such unrighteous use of property. Of course, this raised a hornets' nest. Mr. William Winter, chairman of the trustee board of his church, called on Phillip Strong on the following Monday morning.

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

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

"Then I should say you lied," retorted Mr. Winters, sharply.

Phillip sat very still for a moment, then faithfully admonished his wealthiest member of his sin, and made him his mortal enemy.

The saloon element was stung to the quick by his tremendous indictment of the liquor traffic as the greatest crime against man and sin against God of the age. In leaving his house one night to visit a sick child Phillip Strong was shot down at his own door by an enraged saloon-keeper, and thus the town learned what a murderous thing was the traffic which it was cherishing.

CHAPTER III.

As people waked up in Milton the Wednesday morning after the shooting of Phillip 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 whiskey power burst out, and public sentiment for once condemned the source of the cowardly attempt to murder.

Various rumours 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

Phillip 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 Phillip in the knee but the ball glanced off. Phillip 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 Phillip to fall as if dead, 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