

RAILROAD TIME TABLES.

Chicago & Northwestern.

Table with columns for train names, destinations, and times. Includes 'Going East' and 'Going West' sections.

Western Iowa Division - Boyer Valley Line. Table with train names and times.

Wall Lake, Boyer & Mondamin.

Table with columns for Freight, Going West, Passenger, and times.

Illinois Central.

Table with columns for train names, destinations, and times. Includes 'Going East' and 'Going West' sections.

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MALCOLM KIRK

by Rev. Charles M. Sheldon

(Continued From Seventh Page.)

For a moment he nearly heard what some of his parishioners were saying. They had been talking excitedly together.

"Mr. Kirk, we are of the opinion that this fire was incendiary."

"How is that?" asked Malcom, rousing up a little.

"The first seen of it was in the tower. Now, the fire from the parsonage could not possibly have caught up there. Some one must have set it."

Then different ones began to whisper their suspicions.

The next day, while Malcom and Dorothy were staying with one of the church members who took them into his home, the rumor grew that the fire was the work of the whisky men.

Down on the street excited groups of men gathered that evening, discussing the matter. Every one knew that Malcom Kirk had fought the saloons from the first day of his entrance into Conrad.

He was feared and hated by them more than any one else. He had succeeded to a large degree in getting the other churches to act together in the agitation now going on all over the state. He was already noted for his leadership throughout the county and had written and spoken on every possible occasion for the proposed prohibitory amendment.

So there was reason in the suspicion held by the citizens. As the evening wore on proof of a certain saloon man's guilt seemed almost sure. Two or three persons had seen him coming out of the parsonage yard that afternoon of the fire. A child had seen the same man on the steps of the church a few minutes after Dorothy had left the parsonage.

It was now 10 o'clock. The crowd at the corner by the postoffice grew every minute larger and more threatening. Groups of men stood surrounding some speaker who urged lynching as the only satisfactory punishment for such a crime. The citizens were exasperated and nervous from the great strain of the last two days.

Malcom Kirk came down town late that night to get the mail from the east bound express and walked into the mob just as cries of "Lynch the firebug!" rose from many voices. As soon as the crowd saw him it surrounded him excitedly.

"Mr. Kirk, we've proof that 'Big Jake' set fire to your church."

Malcom looked over the crowd a moment in silence. He had not been thinking so much about the loss of his church and parsonage as he came down town as about Dorothy and his future prospects. But the sight and sound of that mob of citizens brought his mind back to the situation not only in the town of Conrad, but throughout the entire state. For the time, therefore, he let his own personal plans go as he faced the fact of a grave crisis in the temperance movement.

He had more than one Sunday evening held outdoor services at the very corner where the crowd now gathered. Dorothy had often helped him at such services by playing and singing. Every man in Conrad was familiar with the tall, homely, awkward figure that now towered over almost every head, and every man in Conrad respected him.

There was an empty dry goods box near one of the stores, and Malcom Kirk asked some of the men to drag it out to the corner of the sidewalk. The minute he had mounted it the crowd became silent.

It is a rare gift to be able to speak to a great crowd of men out of doors and hold them. Kirk possessed that gift. His voice was a splendid instrument, and he knew how to use it. It is said of Gladstone that in the days of his greatest power as a speaker people would linger in the corridors of the house of commons when he was talking simply to enjoy the sound of the tone of his voice, although they could not distinguish a word that was said. Something of this same quality made Kirk's voice a fascination for an audience. Whatever it was it could truly be called a great gift of God.

And he used it now in a godlike manner. He began by calling attention to the fact that the people of the state were trying to abolish the saloon by legislative amendment to the constitution. At such a time as that, for the temperance people to act in a lawless manner toward even the enemies of the home and the church would be an act of folly so great that it might endanger the entire movement for prohibition.

"I am perhaps," continued Malcom, "the most interested person in this whole matter. It is my church that has been burned and my home that has been destroyed. And yet I say to you men that if you attempt to use violence toward 'Big Jake' or any other saloon keeper on the ground of this circumstantial evidence and take the law into your own hands I will defend him from such violence at the risk of my own life. Let us act like men in this matter—like men who see further than personal vengeance and are determined that our fight shall be directed not against the saloon keeper so much as against the business he represents. That is what we want to fight for in behalf of all our homes and churches and our state and country."

He got down off the box after he had spoken and appeared in a quiet but powerful manner to some of the more influential men in the crowd not to let the men act lawlessly. His speech and appeal had their effect. A small

group of men on the edge of the crowd gathered further up the street, and after Kirk had gone home they marched up to "Big Jake's" saloon, only to find it closed and the proprietor fled.

CHAPTER X.

DOROTHY PROVES HERSELF A HELPMATE. Next day Malcom Kirk had the melancholy pleasure of taking Philip Barton out to "The Forks." He had recovered sufficiently to be moved, and Malcom borrowed a spring wagon and placed him in it comfortably. He complained of feeling queer in his back, and the doctor told Kirk before he started that it would not be at all unexpected if Barton should be paralyzed.

"In fact, Mr. Kirk, my examination makes it almost certain that the boy will probably never recover so as to use the lower part of his body. It seems probable that the wheels of the hay wagon passed over him after he fell out."

The prairie was one vast burned stretch of plain, with the road gray and distinct through it. Philip Barton lay back on the cot that had been arranged in the wagon box and looked up at Malcom with a white, strained face as he drove slowly along over the smooth, elastic prairie road.

At first Malcom drove on silently. The boy seemed to be quite comfortable, but unwilling to talk, and during the first two miles hardly a word was spoken. Then Malcom stopped the horses and bent down to arrange some part of the cot. When he had finished and gathered up the lines to go on again, young Barton spoke.

"You were one of the men that found me and brought me into the town, Mr. Kirk?" The boy had asked it twice before.

"Yes," replied Malcom, smiling. "You can't imagine what a great joy it was to me when we found you."

"And Carver was the other man?"

"That seems queer to me. How did he happen to go with you?"

"Well, I don't know exactly. He seemed eager to go."

"Was he—had he been drinking?" The question came with evident painful effort.

"Yes, I think he had," replied Malcom frankly. "But he was sober enough when we found you."

There was silence, and Malcom gathered up the lines again and started on. The day was very still, and there was a great cloud coming up in the southwest which promised rain before night.

"It was a great thing for you to do," said Philip slowly. "I'll never forget it, Mr. Kirk."

"It was a very little thing, my boy, compared with what was done for me once," said Malcom gravely.

"What was that?"

"I was lost once in a great wilderness and surrounded with wild beasts. I was sick and starving and unable to save myself. Night was coming on, and every minute added to my danger. Just when I had given myself up as lost and the wild beasts had gathered around me in the growing darkness a friend suddenly appeared. He saved me, but in doing it he lost his own life. That is a good deal more than I did for you."

Malcom had listened intently. But something in Malcom's manner kept him silent.

"That wilderness where I was lost," continued Malcom softly as his early life before he entered the seminary came back to him, "was the wilderness of sin, and the wild beasts were my passions, and the friend who saved me was Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the lost, who gave himself a ransom for many."

There was not a particle of cant or attempt at preaching in what Malcom had said. It was so simple, so natural, that the boy on the cot hardly realized at first what the minister had said.

When it dawned upon him that Malcom had spoken of his own conversion, he closed his eyes, and his face twitched under his emotion. When he looked up again, Malcom had turned and was looking down at him.

"Do you mind if we pray here?" said Malcom.

Philip moved his head, and in his eyes a look of expectant wonder grew. Malcom stopped the horses. The prairie was wide and desolate and black, not a sign of life anywhere; the atmosphere was still; the sun shone over it all; the town lay distinct in the rear distance. And somehow it seemed as if Kirk spoke to God close by. He sat with his hands on his knees and looked out into the line of the horizon.

"Father in heaven," he said, "we do not know what it all meant when the Lord came to this earth and lived and suffered and died, but we know enough to feel sure that love for us was what made him do it—love for sinners. We are always asking something, Father, but what we want now is what thou dost want. Save another life—this one here that is in so much need. His body has been saved for a little while from physical death. Save his life for all time, from eternal loss. His mother is praying for him. All heaven is anxious for his salvation. If thou wilt show us what more we can do, dear Lord, we will do it. But lead him to thyself, for we cannot forgive his sins or keep him from them. Thou canst do it if he will let thee. For the great love of Jesus to us we give thee all we have, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory. Amen!"

He gathered up the lines and went slowly on, and for the next mile not a word was said. Then Malcom, hearing the boy move to change his position a little, turned and looked down at him.

"Do you believe that, Mr. Kirk?" he asked, while his lips quivered.

"What?"

"That all heaven is anxious for my salvation?"

"Why not? The book says 'there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth.' Why shouldn't heaven be anxious to have us repent?"

"I don't know, but—"

"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." He cares as much for you as for any soul on earth," said Malcom gently.

Philip was silent after that during the rest of the drive. He lay with his eyes closed, and Malcom did not think it wise to talk any more to him, but a continual prayer went out of his heart for another sheep gone astray.

When they drove up to the house at "The Forks," Mrs. Barton came running out. She helped Malcom lift Philip into the house, and as the boy was being lowered upon a bed he reached up his arms and put them about his mother's neck. The poor woman sank on her knees and with her face buried on the breast of her boy sobbed out her heart's joy at his homecoming. When Kirk was ready to return to Conrad, she held his hand, reluctant to have him go.

"Heaven bless you, Mr. Kirk. I owe you more than I can tell. The fire carried off our grain stacks in the field out there, and we lost several of our sheds, but I would gladly go out into the world a beggar if Phil would only turn to God and give up the drink. And you and Mrs. Kirk have your great burden. I am selfish to add mine to it."

"Bear ye one another's burdens," quoted Malcom and added instantly, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee." So he left her standing there, looking after him, comforted.

He went back to Conrad and faced the situation there with a courageous heart and an outward cheerfulness for Dorothy's sake more than anything else. There was no attempt on the part of either of them to disguise the fact that the prospect before them was one that would try all their Christian courage and faith. The winter was coming on, the crops had been almost a total failure owing to the hot winds, and the little boom of which Wilson had spoken in his letter had collapsed, leaving the town in a wrecked condition financially. The fields that had been planted to corn stood dry and hard, unfit for fall plowing, and even the storm that broke over the town that night was only local and had no far-reaching result on the general situation.

It was also a new and in some respects a terrible condition that faced

the town. Malcom Kirk, Conrad, Kan.

Dear Brother—It is with great regret that the society is compelled to announce to many of the brethren who are commissioned on the frontier that, owing to a lack of funds in the New York treasury, it will be impossible to forward the quarter's salary when due. It is with the greatest possible regret that I am obliged to make this statement, but it is unavoidable. It is probable there may be a delay of three or four months before the money can be sent. Meanwhile your church must be urged to do all it can for your support until the weather churches respond to the special appeal now being sent out by the society in behalf of the missionaries at the front. I am, your brother, etc.

The second letter that Dorothy opened was from the Church Building society expressing great regret that, owing to excessive calls from other fields, the society did not have the funds to spare at present to assist the unfortunate church at Conrad, but hoped to be able to do so at some future time, etc.

Dorothy hesitated before she opened the next letter, and in spite of her effort at self control a tear fell with a hot splash on the envelope. She knew only too well what a real disappointment the letters she had already opened would be to Malcom.

The third letter bore a Boston postmark and was from the editor of a religious paper. It acknowledged the receipt of an article sent by Malcom some two months before and retained it with a view to publication when the press of matter already accepted would permit, etc. Payment for the article would be sent when it was published.

Dorothy's face flushed with pride at Malcom's success as a writer, and at the same time she could not help feeling that if the editor of that paper only knew how much they needed the money he would pay for the article when he accepted it instead of keeping the author waiting until it appeared in print. But she was unfamiliar with the customs of magazines and newspapers in this respect, and she rejoiced, after all, that her husband had been able to write anything that such a famous paper wanted.

The last letter also bore a Boston postmark, and after reading the letter Dorothy laid it down and rose to walk the little room, while her cheeks burned with excitement and her eyes flashed with a light that had not been seen in them for many days. The letter read:

My Dear Mr. Kirk—For several months we have been considering your name in connection with a vacancy on our editorial board and have at last decided unanimously to ask you to assume the place of assistant under the chief editor of the magazine. We have been led to this decision by our knowledge of your work on the German scholarship three years ago and also from a perusal of several articles recently written by you and printed in the Boston Review. In addition to this we know of your work in Conrad through Mr. Wilson, your old seminary classmate, who last year was on our board for a time. We make you this offer and hope you will see your way to accept. The salary will be \$2,000 a year, with opportunity of increase. The press is as powerful as the pulpit in these days, and you may be sure your usefulness will not be shortened or lessened by making this change. We await your reply, hoping it will be favorable to us.

Here followed the name of a person who was at the head of one of the most influential papers published in New England. Dorothy knew well enough how much Malcom thought of the man and how often he had expressed his admiration for the character of his literary work.

She picked the letter up and read it through again. What was there in Conrad, this wild, uninteresting western town, struggling against a financial depression and a future as well as a past failure of crops? How could Malcom ever rise to any place worthy of his powers in this little church, so feeble and so poor? "It is true," she found herself saying; "it is true he chose the ministry as his life work, and he has often said he would not do anything else. But—"

She went to the door and stepped

out on the little porch. It was after 10 o'clock and a frosty night. Down the main street she could see the lights from the saloons. There was a brawl going on in front of one of them, but that was common—a group of cowboys galloping down the street, firing their pistols as they came. That was not unusual. Dorothy shuddered. What of that promise she had made with Malcom to try to redeem the lost of Conrad? Was it worth while, after all? It would be so much pleasanter to live in Boston. They could have things and live as other people lived, and after awhile her husband would become famous, and—

"Well, little woman, won't you take cold out here?"

It was Malcom, and he led her into the house again. She had not seen him come. He had unexpectedly finished his engagement and been able to return much sooner than he expected.

She saw as he came in that he was very tired, but was making a brave effort to appear cheerful and contented. She hesitated about showing him the letters, but he had already seen the open envelopes on the table, and his hand went out toward them. Dorothy stood between him and the table.

"Will you read them in the order I say?" asked Dorothy.

"Certainly. Must I get ready for bad news?" he asked soberly.

"It is for you to say," Dorothy answered. And she gave him the letters in the same order that she had opened them and stood watching his face hungrily as he read them.

(To Be Continued.)

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