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ROBERT HARDY'S SEVEN DAYS.

A DREAM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

BY REV. CHARLES M. SHELDON.

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The evening had sped on with surprising rapidity while all these matters were being discussed, and as it drew near to midnight again Robert Hardy felt almost happy in the atmosphere of that home and the thought that he could still for a little while create joy for those who loved him. Suddenly he spoke of his other son:

"I wish George would come in. Then our family circle would be complete. But it is bedtime for you, Bess, and all of us, for that matter."

It was just then that steps were heard on the front porch, and voices were heard as if talking in whispers. The bell rang. Mr. Hardy rose to go to the door. His wife clung to him terrified.

"Oh, don't go, Robert! I am afraid for you."

"Why, Mary, it cannot be anything to harm me. Don't be alarmed."

Nevertheless he was a little startled. The day had been a trying one for him. He went to the door, his wife and the children following him close behind. He threw it wide open, and there, sup-



There was his son George, too drunk to stand alone. ported by two of his companions, one of them the young man Mr. Hardy had seen in the hotel lobby at noon, was his son George, too drunk to stand alone. He leered into the face of his father and mother with a drunken look that froze their souls with despair as the blaze of the hall lamp fell upon him reeling there.

And so the first of Robert Hardy's seven days came to an end.

CHAPTER V.

Mr. Hardy was a man of great will power, but this scene with his drunken son crushed him for a moment and seemed to take the very soul out of him. Mrs. Hardy at first uttered a wild cry and then ran forward and, seizing her elder boy, almost dragged him into the house, while Mr. Hardy, recovering from his first shock, looked sternly at the companions of the boy and then shut the door. That night was a night of sorrow in that family. The sorrow of death is not to be compared with it.

But morning came, and it comes alike to the condemned criminal and to the pure hearted child on a holiday, and after a brief and troubled rest Mr. Hardy awoke to his second day, the memory of the night coming to him at first as an ugly dream, but afterward as a terrible reality. His boy drunk! He could not make it seem possible. Yet there in the next room he lay in a drunken stupor, sleeping off the effects of his debauch of the night before. Mr. Hardy fell on his knees and prayed for mercy, again repeating the words, "Almighty God, help me to use the remaining days in the wisest and best manner." Then calming himself by a tremendous effort he rose up and faced the day's work as bravely as any man under such circumstances could.

After a family council, in which all of them were drawn nerve together, that they ever had been before on account of their troubles, Mr. Hardy outlined the day's work something as follows:

First, he would go and see James Caxton and talk over the affair with him and Clara. Then he would go down to the office and arrange some necessary details of his business. If possible, he would come home to lunch. In the afternoon he would go to poor Scoville's funeral, which had been arranged for 2 o'clock. Mrs. Hardy announced her intention to go also. Then Mr. Hardy thought he would have a visit with George and spend the evening at home arranging matters with reference to his own death. With this programme in mind he finally went away after an affectionate leave taking with his wife and children.

George slept heavily until the middle of the forenoon and then awoke with a raging headache. Bess had several times during the morning stolen into the room to see if her brother were awake. When he did finally turn over and open his eyes, he saw the young girl standing by the bedside. He groaned as he recalled the night and his mother's look, and Bess said timidly as she laid her hand on his forehead:

"George, I'm so sorry for you! Don't you feel well?"

"I feel as if my head would split open. It aches as if some one was

which to gamble, and yet in the very next room Mrs. Hardy knelt in an agony of petition for that firstborn, crying out of her heart:

"O God, it is more than I can bear! To see him growing away from me so! Dear Lord, be thou merciful to me. Bring him back again to the life he used to live! How proud I was of him! What a joy he was to me! And now, and now! O gracious Father, if thou art truly compassionate, bear me! Has not this foul demon of drink done harm enough? That it should still come into my home! Ah, but I have been indifferent to the cries of other women, but now it strikes me! Spare me, great and powerful Almighty! My boy! my heart's hunger is for him! I would rather see him dead than see him as I saw him last night. Spare me! spare me, O God!"

Thus the mother prayed, dry eyed and almost despairing, while he for whom she prayed that heartbroken prayer calculated, with growing coldness of mind, the chances of getting more money from his father to use in drink and at the gambling table.

O appetite, and thou spirit of gambling! Ye are twin demons with whom many a fair browed young soul today is marching arm in arm down the dread pavement of hell's vestibule, lined with grinning skeletons of past victims, and yet men gravely discuss the probability of evil and think there is no special danger in a little speculation now and then.

Parents say, "Oh, my boy wouldn't do such a thing!" But how many know really and truly what their boy is really doing, and how many of the young men would dare reveal to their mothers or fathers the places where they have been and the amusements they have tasted and the things for which they have spent their money?

Mr. Hardy went at once to his neighbors, the Caxtons, who lived only a block away. He had not been on speaking terms with the family for some time, and he dreaded the interview with the sensitive dread of a very proud and stern willed man. But two days had made a great change in him. He was a new man in Christ Jesus, and as he rang the bell he prayed for wisdom and humility.

James himself came to the door with his overcoat on and hat in hand, evidently just ready to go down town. He started back at seeing Mr. Hardy.

"Are you going down town? I will not come in then, but walk along with you," said Mr. Hardy quietly.

So James came out, and the two walked along together. There was an awkward pause for a minute; then Mr. Hardy said:

"James, is it true that you and Clara are engaged?"

"No, sir; that is not exactly what you might call engaged. We would like to be."

Mr. Hardy smiled in spite of himself, and James added in a quickened tone, "We would like to be, with your consent, sir."

Mr. Hardy walked on thoughtfully and then glanced at the young man at his side. He was 6 feet tall, not very handsome as Bessie had frankly said, but he had a good face, a steady, clear blue eye and resolute air, as of one who was willing to work hard to get what he wanted. Mr. Hardy could not help contrasting him with his own prematurely broken down son George, and he groaned inwardly as he thought of the foolish pride that would bar the doors of his family to a young man like James Caxton simply because he was poor and because his father had won in a contested election in which the two older men were candidates for the same office.

It did not take long to think all this. Then he said, looking again at the young man with a businesslike look:

"Supposing you had my permission, what are your prospects for support?"



"James, is it true that you and Clara are engaged?"

"Yes, she has always had everything she wanted. What could you give her?"

The question might have seemed cold and businesslike. The tone was thoughtful and serious.

A light flashed into James' eyes, but he said simply: "I am in a position to make a thousand dollars a year next spring. I earn something extra with my pen at home."

Mr. Hardy did not reply to this. He said, "Do you know what a willful, quick tempered girl Clara is?"

"I have known her from a little child, Mr. Hardy. I feel as if I knew her about as well as you do."

"Perhaps you know her better than I do. I do not know my child as I should."

The tone was not bitter, but intensely sad. The young man had, of course, been greatly wondering at this talk from Mr. Hardy and had observed the change in his speech. He looked at him now and noted the pale, almost haggard, face and his extremely thoughtful appearance.

"Mr. Hardy," said James frankly, "you are in trouble. I wish I could help you. No, you can't help me any in this except," continued Mr. Hardy, with a faint smile, "except you solve this trouble between you and my daughter."

"There is no trouble between us, sir," replied James simply. "You know I love her and have loved her for a long time, and I believe I am able to support her and make her happy. Won't you give your consent, sir? We are not children. We know our minds."

James was beginning to speak very earnestly. He was beginning to hope that the stern, proud man who had so

curtly dismissed him a little while before would in some unaccountable manner relent and give him his heart's desire.

Mr. Hardy walked along in silence a little way. Then he said almost abruptly:

"James, do you drink?"

"No, sir."

"Or gamble?"

"You forget my mother, Mr. Hardy." The reply was almost stern.

Mrs. Caxton's younger brother had been ruined by gambling. He had come to the house one night, and in a fit of anger because his sister would not give him money to carry on his speculation he had threatened her life. James had interposed and at the risk of his own life had probably saved his mother's. Mrs. Caxton had been so unmercifully that her scene that day had suffered from it seriously. All this had happened when James was growing out of boyhood. But not a day had passed that the young man did not see a sad result of that great gambling passion in his own mother's face and bearing. He loathed the thought of a vice so debasing that it ignored all the tender ties of kindred and was ready to stop at nothing in order to get means for its exercise.

Mr. Hardy knew the story, and he exclaimed: "Forgive me, James. I did not think." Then, after a pause: "Are you a Christian? I mean do you have a faith in the revelation of God to men through Jesus Christ, and do you try to live according to his teachings, with a supreme love for God controlling life? Do you live every day as if it might be the last you would have to live?"

James started. Was Mr. Hardy out of his mind? He had never heard him talk like this before. The idea of Mr. Hardy caring about his religious character in the event of his becoming a son-in-law was an idea too remote for occurrence. He could see, however, that some very powerful change had taken place in Mr. Hardy's usual demeanor. His words also produced a strong effect upon the young man. He was like thousands of young men—temperate, honest, industrious, free from vices, strictly moral, but without any decided religious faith.

"Am I a Christian?" he asked himself, echoing Mr. Hardy's question. No; he could not say that he was. He had never said so to any one. He had, in fact, never been confronted with the question before. So he replied to Mr. Hardy:

"No, sir; I don't think I am what would be called a Christian. As for living as if every day were to be my last—do you think that is possible, sir?"

Mr. Hardy did not answer. He walked along thoughtfully. In the course of the conversation they had reached the corner where the young man turned down to his office, and the two paused.

"I want to have another talk with you," Mr. Hardy said. "Today is Tuesday; say tomorrow evening. I want to see your father also, and"—Mr. Hardy was on the point of saying that he wanted to ask the elder Caxton's forgiveness, but for some reason he stopped without doing so.

James exclaimed eagerly as Mr. Hardy turned to go:

"Then you don't forbid my entertaining some hope of your good will in the matter of my love for Clara?" He lowered his voice and spoke very strongly.

"You don't forget your own youth and the way in which you yourself began your home?"

Mr. Hardy answered never a word to this appeal, but looked into the young man's face with a gaze he did not forget all day, then wrung his hand and turned on his heel abruptly and walked rapidly down the street.

James looked after him as he disappeared among the crowds of people going to their business, and then turned to his own tasks. But something in him gave him hope. Another something appealed all day to his inner nature, and he could not shake off the impression of Mr. Hardy's question, "Are you a Christian?" And even when he went home at night that question pursued him more strenuously than any other and would not give him peace.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

This is for You.

The country editor must and does depend upon his friends to help make his paper interesting. Show some interest in your local paper and give all the information you can to the publisher. Marriages, deaths, births, divorces or any little item may interest some one. Such items are often absent simply because you do not let the editor know of it. Did you ever stop to think what a steady letter writer a newspaper is? Week after week it goes on telling of these little things that happen in your neighborhood. If you undertook to write half as much as the paper tells you would give up in despair. The letters would grow shorter and further apart and finally cease. People in a live town recognize this and take pleasure in giving the editor items he would otherwise never learn.—Western Publisher.

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MINNIE April 20, 1873—Dec. 14, 1901.	EMMA Aug. 18, 1874—Oct. 9, 1893.
ANNA Dec. 5, 1875—Sept. 11, 1902.	AMANDA Mar. 26, 1877—Jan. 5, 1899.
ELLEN Mar. 6, 1881—Dec. 19, 1900.	ERNEST Oct. 3, 1882—Nov. 19, 1902.

SLEEPING THE LONG SLEEP.

Remains of Ernest Nelson are Laid Away in their Last Earthly Resting Place.

The funeral of the deceased Ernest Nelson of Nest Lake, whose death was briefly mentioned last week, occurred last Saturday afternoon. A number of the friends of the family gathered at the home about two o'clock and a brief service were held there. Rev. C. J. Collin read a scripture lesson and Rev. J. J. Daniels led in prayer. The remains were then taken to the Swedish Lutheran Lebanon church at New London, where Rev. Collin preached an impressive sermon, using the words of the Saviour: "What I do, thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter." After a song by the choir, the remains were taken out into the church cemetery and lowered into its last earthly resting place and the burial service was read. The pall bearers were Edwin and Anton Bengtson, Frank and Samuel Nelson, John Erickson and Emil J. Johnson, all late associates of the deceased. A large number of people attended the services, attesting their respect for the deceased and their sympathy for the sorely stricken family.

Coal in Clay County.

Coal is said to be discovered in Clay county, Minn., six miles east of Barnesville on the farm of a man named Anderson. A short time ago Anderson had occasion to bore a well on his farm near Barnesville and at a depth of seventy-five feet struck a hard substance that on examination had the appearance of coal. The drill penetrated through about twelve feet of the material. Anderson sent a few samples of the substance to St. Paul and it was pronounced coal. D. M. Sabin, Ex-United States Senator, learned of the incident and visited Mr. Anderson, offering him \$150 per acre for his farm, which was refused. It is stated that Mr. Anderson has made a contract with the Great Northern by which that company will be allowed to prospect and if coal is found in paying quantities, Anderson is to receive 15 cents per ton royalty upon all coal mined. There is considerable excitement in Clay county over the discovery.—Fargo Forum.

The Gun Burst.

Arthur Piers, traveling salesman for Marshall, Wells Hardware Co., of Minneapolis, received a badly wounded wrist last Tuesday while duck hunting at Diamond Lake in company with H. W. Jones and other hunters. The accident was caused by the bursting of the gun and the charge and portions of the gun struck the unfortunate man in the wrist, making an ugly wound. The flesh was torn away clear to the bone and arteries and veins were completely severed. He was kept from bleeding to death only by tying handkerchiefs tightly around the arm until he could be brought to Atwater where the wound received treatment by Dr. Archibald. He left on the afternoon train for his home in Minneapolis.—Atwater Republican Press.

Auction Sale.

Having rented my farm I will sell at public auction at my place in Sec. 9, town of Green Lake, 11 miles south of Spicer on the Willmar road, on Friday, Dec. 5, 1902, beginning at 10 o'clock a. m., the following property:

Three working horses, one 3-year-old colt, 6 milch cows, 2 heifers, 1 1/2 blood Shorthorn bull, 3 calves, 13 hogs, 1 binder, 1 mower, 1 16-shoe drill, 1 new hay rake, 1 3-horse drag, 1 2-horse cultivator 1 1-horse cultivator, 1 walking plow, 1 gang plow, 2 lumber wagons, 1 single top buggy, 1 2-seated buggy, 1 1000-lb. scale, some corn, oats and hay, my household goods and other articles too numerous to mention.

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