His Brother's Keeper; or, Christian Stewardship.

BY CHARLES M. SHELDON,

Author of "In His Steps," "The Crucifixion of Philip Strong," "Robert Hardy's Seven Days," "Malcom Kirk," Etc.

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used to say, as working in a powder mill during a thunderstorm.

"Why? Don't you think the prayer was sincere?" Stuart asked.

"Sincere enough. But pshaw! What's the use? We all know how the strike will end, prayer or no prayer."

"What's happened to Eric, doctor? He never used to be religious. Not that way."

"Salvation Army," replied the doctor briefly.

"Oh!" Stuart looked puzzled, but he thought he would have it all out with Eric. There was so much to talk over since they had parted a year ago. So many grave questions had arisen in their lives that needed to be discussed. He was growing anxious as they drove along concerning his father and sister. It was very strange that they had not met him at the station. But the strike and all might have kept his father. It was a different home coming from that of his anticipation.

The house stood back from the road on the side of the hill. It was a handsome brick mansion, surrounded by a dozen immense pines. Stuart loved the place. It was dear to his memories. He had no recollection of any other home, although he had been born in one of the eastern states. It was in this house that his mother had died when he was 10 years old. He owed his thoughtful, romantic, truthful nature to her. From his father on the other hand, he had inherited his slow, stubborn, occasional fierce bursting out of passionate feelings. He thought of all the happy times in the old house where as a boy and later as college man he had enjoyed all the luxuries of wealth and leisure and companionship.

Suddenly a man drove out of the roadway into which he and the doctor were just turning to go up to the house. Both men pulled up just in time to avoid running into each other.

"Is that you, Dr. Saxon?" shouted the man. "I was just going for you. Mr. Duncan has been hurt. The horses ran away this morning and"—

Stuart did not wait to hear more. He jumped out of the buggy and at the top of his speed cut through the grounds in front of the house. The doctor uttered an exclamation, gave his horse one short stroke with the whip and dashed up the driveway like a whirlwind. At the end of the long veranda he stopped long enough to jump out and let the horse go on to the barn. He met Stuart just leaping up the veranda steps.

"Now, then, my boy," said the doctor quietly, filling up the doorway with his large frame and getting directly in front of Stuart, "don't get excited. This is my case, not yours."

"Let me by!" cried Stuart, his face almost black with passion. "He is my father! Perhaps he is dying! What right have you to keep in the way?"

"Very well." The doctor spoke softly, almost like a child. He stepped aside and began to walk slowly down the veranda steps. "You have inherited the Duncan passion to perfection, but if your father dies through your nonsensical exercise of it just now don't blame me."

Stuart made one stride and caught the doctor's arm. "Come back!" he said. All his black passion was gone in an instant. "I will be a man like you. Come! You will perhaps need my help."

The doctor looked keenly at him and at once turned around and entered the house with him. The incident would not mean anything without a knowledge of what was at stake on this occasion. But Dr. Saxon had good reason to believe that the life of the son in this instance was imperiled by the fearful excitement which at rare intervals broke out in him like a torrent. To confront the father with him under those conditions might prove serious to them both.

Within the house servants were running about in confusion. The doctor

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stopped one of them and said roughly: "Now, then, are you all crazy here? Where is Mr. Duncan?"

"They carried him into the north room," was the answer.

"North room! Why didn't you carry him to the north pole and be done with it! Here, Stuart! Send one of the men down for my black case at the office and then come to your father."

The doctor went down the long hall, turned to the right into another corridor and entered a large room at the end.

Lying over the bed in the middle of the room was a young woman. Her arms were clasped over the face of the man who lay there, and she had fainted in that position.

The doctor lifted her up just as Stuart entered.

"O God! Louise, too!" he cried.

The doctor gave him a look that calmed him and replied: "No; she is in a faint. Now, then, use all the sense you have, and it won't be too much. You look after your sister while I see to your father."

He put Louise into Stuart's arms, who, with the servant's help, soon restored her to consciousness, while the doctor turned to the man on the bed and in a masterly manner proceeded to do all that his skill and keenness of practice could do.

Ross Duncan lay like a dead man. He was of powerful build and looked very stern and hard even as he lay there helpless. There was a terrible gash over one of his eyes. He was covered with blood and dust, bruised from head to foot, with clothes torn and disfigured, but he had not lost consciousness, and, with the iron will which had always characterized him, he managed to let the doctor know his wishes.

"All right, all right, Mr. Duncan," said the doctor in reply to a whisper from the wounded man. "I won't give you any anæsthetic if you don't want it. I shall have to sew up this little place over your eye, though. Has that tortoise got around with that case yet?" he asked Stuart, who had left Louise a minute to come over to the bed.

"He hasn't had time yet, doctor."

"Why didn't he take my horse?" growled the doctor. "How is Louise?"

"Better. But what a terrible fall father must have had!"

Stuart felt for his father's hand, and Ross Duncan's fingers closed over those of his son. Stuart kneeled by the bed and kissed his father's cheek as he used to do when a boy. The older man was evidently moved by the caress. A tear rolled over his face.

"Come now," broke in the doctor, apparently gruffer than ever. "One would think you two hadn't seen each other for a year at least! We must get him ready for the operation. Stuart you promised to help me. Give me your attention now."

The doctor soon had his patient as comfortable as the nature of the injuries would allow. The case arrived, the gash was sewed up quickly, and at the end of the hour Ross Duncan was resting under the influence of a draft, while the doctor, Stuart and Louise were in another room talking over the accident.

The sister of Stuart Duncan was very pretty, very proud and very selfish. She was 6 years younger than her brother. She had been two years to a finishing school in New York, but had not finished any particular branch of study. She could play the piano a little and the harp a little and do other things, except housework, a little. She lay on the lounge now, with Stuart near by stroking her head, and told the story of the accident:

"Father and I started to drive down to the station this morning to meet you, Stuart. When we reached the crossroad leading up to the Forge mine, we were early for the train, and father drove up to the engine house on some business. When we got up there, the miners were gathering to march down to the square. It was the first news of the strike we had had. Father was very much excited and talked to the men to persuade them to go back to work. Some of them talked back in the most insulting way; said they were free men and did not have to work for a corporation and all that. You know how they talk, Stuart. Nothing makes father so angry, and I don't blame him. I think the men are simply horrid to make all this trouble just now as I was getting ready to go east for that yachting cruise with the Vasplaines, and this strike will probably stop their going.

"Then father jumped out of the carriage and was going to give one of the men who insulted him a good thrashing, and serve him right, when the rest came around and made him get into the carriage again. I never saw father so angry, and I was scared almost to death, the men were so rough. We drove back to the crossroad, and at that steep turn by that old Beury shaft we came upon a crowd of miners marching into town from the lower range. They were carrying a large white banner with some horrid picture on it. The horses were frightened and turned and ran right toward the old shaft. I don't know what happened then, only we were thrown out, and it is a miracle that I was not killed. Jem, the coachman, was driving, and he fell on a pile of shaft ore. He ran up to the house and got the other horses and brought father and me home. I fainted away several times, and when I saw father laid on the bed with that awful gash on his head I thought he was killed. If he dies, the miners will be to blame. If it hadn't been for their going out on this strike, this horrible accident would not have happened. It's all as horrid as it can be!"

At this point Louise burst into a great fit of hysterical crying.

"Dear, you must have been hurt by the fall!" cried Stuart as he soothed and comforted her.

"No, no! I was not even bruised!" replied Louise. She stopped crying and sat up on the lounge and began to arrange her hair.

Dr. Saxon walked toward the other end of the room with a peculiar look on his face. Then he wheeled around and said with his characteristic bluntness: "I must go back to the office. I've left directions for your father's treatment. He is not dangerously hurt. Send for me if I am needed. Miss Louise, you had better take those powders and keep as quiet as possible today."

He laid the medicine down on a table and went out. A minute later his horse was heard rushing by the veranda and down the road.

So this was the home coming of Stuart Duncan after his year's absence abroad. He had visited with interest many of the famous capitals of Europe. He had sauntered through museums and picture galleries, he had studied not very profoundly, but with genuine interest, the people he had met and the customs he had observed that were new. The year had been very largely a holiday for him. He had used all the money he wished, drawing on his letter of credit without any thought of economy. His father was several times a millionaire and never stinted the money. What he wanted was that his son and daughter should have the best of everything, from clothes and food to education and travel. And Stuart had gone through college and through Europe with about the same easy feeling of having a comfortable time. He was perfectly healthy, had no vices (he did not even like a cigar), unusually thoughtful on some questions, with no particular weaknesses and no special enthusiasms. If he gave his future any thought while abroad, it was simply to picture a life of business in connection with his father's mining interests. That was the father's desire, and Stuart did not have any other.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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