

His Brother's Keeper ;

Or, Christian Stewardship.

BY CHARLES M. SHELTON,
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of Philip Street," "The
Merry Seven Days," "The
Seven Days," etc.

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Continued from First Page.

"Do you mean that you will incite the men to violence?"

"Good God, Stuart, you know I will not! I shall use my utmost power to prevent anything of the kind."

"But what if it cannot be prevented?"

Eric said nothing. His face changed with a torrent of feeling and passion.

"If it comes to that, let God be judge if the owners and not the men are really the ones most to blame. I shall use all my influence to prevent violence or lawlessness. The union has a right to lawless force such wages as it thinks are just. It has no right to prevent other men from working at any wages they choose to take. Since I joined the Salvation Army I have become convinced that the only permanent basis for any true settlement of labor and capital differences must be a religious basis—that is, Christian."

Stuart listened with an interest he felt to be genuine. "How did you happen to join the Salvation Army, Eric?"

"It's a long story. I'll tell you some time, not now."

"I've heard part of it, but I want you to tell me all of it."

"I can't now. I must go. I have hardly had a minute's time to myself since this movement came on. I must be going now. You leave for Cleveland."

"Tonight. I want to be there tomorrow. I can tell beforehand what the companies will say. Is there no other way out of it?"

"I don't see any," replied Eric silently, and went out.

Stuart went down on the night express and next day at Cleveland was in conference with the other owners. The result of the conference was that he had anticipated. The terms of the union were rejected. It was decided by the other owners that a force of men should be at once placed at work with steam shovels on the stock piles so as to move the ore, and in case there was trouble the troops would be called out. Stuart refused to take action on his own mines. He would not yet precipitate matters by getting new men either for the stock piles or the mines. He came back home the next day with the feeling that he was at present in a condition of indecision and waiting. He could not sympathize with the strike, he did not believe the union was wise in refusing to let the Champion miners go to work, and he could not help feeling that a great calamity of some kind was impending.

It was two days after his return that the event occurred which really shaped and molded his whole after life. The mines were still manned by pump men. They had not been called out by the union, for the reason that if once the water in the mines rose above the different levels and flowed in among the timbers the mines would become ruined, and the loss would be as heavy for the miners as the owners in case the strike ended and work was again resumed. From six to eight men remained at each mine. There were an engineer, an assistant engineer, two firemen and three or four pump men, according to the size and number of pumps. These were kept going day and night, as the water rose very rapidly if left to flow.

Stuart had gone up to the Davis mine, one of the newer ventures of his father and recently developed. It had a greatest depth was 900 feet. It had a manhole with ladders and a shaft at some distance from it for the "skip" or iron carriage used for hauling ore to the surface. There were six men at this mine in charge of this time. Stuart had come to the engine house and was talking with the engineer when Eric came in.

Stuart called him over to the dry room, where the miners changed their clothing for mine's dress.

"Eric, I want to go down into the mine. Won't you go with me? I want to see again for myself what the work is, and besides there is a new pump at the bottom that I want to look at."

Eric consented, and the two soon had on the miner's dress and were going down the ladders. It was getting late in the afternoon, and they left orders with the engineer that when they gave the signal from the bottom he might let down the skip, and they would come up in that.

For an hour they explored different levels. Stuart was restless and seemed intent on realizing as fully as possible just how the miners worked. He climbed up into different places and even fired off a blast in one chamber, using one of the powder sticks left by the men when they came out.

At last he and Eric stood at the bottom of the mine. This was an excavation about 14 feet across, and the water ran in very much as if it had been a cistern. By leaning back against the ladders the light from 900 feet above could be seen. Eric was sitting there with his back to the ladders and his feet in the water which ran over the floor of the mine about four inches deep and Stuart was examining the pump at the other side of the shaft when a terrible thing happened. A noise like the roar of a torrent grew about these two men, and before Eric could get out from his position against the ladders a mass of iron ore came rushing down the manhole, breaking out rounds of the ladders as it fell, and bounding from side to side, struck Eric on the shoulders with terrific force and threw him face downward in the water.

Stuart was at his side in a moment. He raised him and by the light of the candle in his hat saw the nature of the accident. He could not think whether the mass had fallen or been thrown purposely into the shaft. He dragged Eric away from the foot of the ladder. He was seriously injured. With the

one thought of getting him to the top as soon as possible Stuart seized the lever at the bottom of the ore shaft and pulled it back as a signal to the engineer to let down the skip. There was no answering signal, and Stuart pulled the wire rope again. Still no answer. He looked up through the main shaft. What was that? The pump had suddenly stopped below. But what was that great light at the top? It must be nearly sundown now. Something was on fire! The truth flashed upon him that the engine house over the main shaft was on fire. The ladders afforded escape for a man possibly, but not for a man with a body, and a dead body perhaps at that. Stuart dashed water in Eric's face, and he groaned. He was not dead, but unconscious. And then the whole situation forced itself



He supported Eric as best he could.

Into Stuart's mind. He was a prisoner with a helpless wounded man at the bottom of a mine 900 feet deep, the engine house was on fire or some accident had happened to prevent the lowering of the skip, the pumps had stopped, and the water in the mine was rising rapidly. It was half way to his knees now. He pulled the lever again and again, and in his excitement shouted like a madman. There was no answer from above. The manhole ladders were still clear. Even as they were, with the broken places, he was strong and vigorous and could climb out. But not with the burden of Eric. At that moment a charred fragment of wood floated down the ore shaft and dropped hissing in the water. He realized that he stood in the presence of death. He offered a prayer for help. He supported Eric as best he could. The water was now above his knees and rapidly rising.

CHAPTER III.

THE RESCUE.

As the facts of his position forced themselves more clearly upon him, the first excitement over Stuart grew calmer. The candle in his hat was nearly burned out, but he had another one that, after the fashion of the miners, he had thrust into his boot when he changed his dress in the dry room. He pulled this out and lighted it, putting it in the candle holder in place of the piece so nearly gone.

Then he looked at the ladders carefully. The mass of broken ore which had fallen down the manhole had broken out a dozen rounds at the very foot of the ladder. By stretching up to his full height Stuart could just reach an unbroken round.

But what could he do with the dead weight of Eric? He could never lift him up that distance. For once and only once since Stuart considered the thought of leaving Eric. It was simply the love of life asserting itself. Why should both men die? His death would not save Eric. It was only a second, and then he felt the shock of a statement he made to himself that life was not worth having if certain memories had always to be carried with one. He could never abandon the man who had once risked his life to save him, when the danger was fully as great as now.

"But, O God," Stuart cried out, "to die drowned like a rat in a hole!" The love of life was strong in him. He felt the water rising more and more rapidly. It was nearly to his waist now. He felt the blood from the wound in his shoulder warming his own side as he held up the unconscious body. Once in awhile Eric stirred. Once he opened his eyes, and Stuart thought he was regaining consciousness. It only could be a trick of the mind, however, for he was a little. Stuart's mind went into a whirl as he thought of all possible ways to pull himself and Eric up even a short distance. But the bottom of the mine was of such a shape that there were no projections or slopes which afforded even a foothold.

The fire at the top was evidently blazing fiercely. Fragments of charred wood dropped down the ore shaft. Leaning over and looking up, Stuart could see a great flaming mass of twisted beams and iron rods curling over the mouth of the shaft. He moved over under the manhole, dragging Eric with him, and looked up that. The flames and smoke were sweeping over like mist over a ridge. He thought that even at that distance he could see that the ladders at the top had caught and were blazing fantastically.

He gave up all hope. Still, with the instinct of life strong in him, he dragged Eric over to the pump, which stood just out of the water now, and by the exercise of all his strength he managed to place the body upon it. In such a way that it was two or three feet above himself as he stood on the bottom of the floor of the mine. The water had risen now to his armpits and was whirling around him in a great red pool. He shuddered, it looked so like blood in the light of the candle. The movement he had made with Eric, together with the contact with the cold water, had roused him. He stirred and even spoke feebly.

"Where are you?" he muttered.

"You have been hurt, Eric."

Eric groaned and closed his eyes. Then he opened them again, and the sight of Stuart's pale face seemed to tell him a part of the truth. The water was running over the hand of his right arm, which hung down helpless from his wounded shoulder. He roused himself, evidently with the greatest difficulty.

"You will drown. Leave me. I am dying anyway."

"No, no, Eric. I will not leave you here alone!" Stuart spoke calmly, almost cheerfully. Eric's face was drooping over close to Stuart's shoulder. Stuart kissed his cheek and at that very moment he heard a man's voice.

the sweetest sound he ever heard, echoing down the ladder shaft.

He shouted back in reply and waited. Again the cry came in response. Some one was coming down the ladders to the rescue. Whoever he was he was evidently coming as fast as the nature of the passage would allow. For the next time the cry was uttered Stuart could hear words of encouragement and then a voice speaking from the point where the last round of the ladder remained, saying very distinctly and in even precise English, "Who is there?"

"It is I, Stuart Duncan. I am here with Eric, and he is hurt and helpless. I can't lift him up alone."

"I always believed in letting on time," replied the voice, "if you can time up under the foot of the shaft I will throw you this rope."

Stuart lifted Eric from his position and plunged over toward the ladder hole. The water was above his shoulders. A rope was thrown, and he secured it under Eric, who had again fastened from the pain and shock. Then with an exercise of strength and skill such as men possess in times of facing death, the two men, one above and one below, succeeded in drawing Eric up, and the man above secured him somehow, while Stuart, using the sides of the ladder for support, pulled himself out of that watery grave.

He was not a minute too soon, for the water was flowing in more rapidly now, and the huge cavity at the bottom being almost filled the torrent began to rise in the shafts very fast. He had no time to ask any questions of his rescuer. All three were in great peril. The ladders were blazing above them and the water rising below them. With supernatural exertions they urged Eric up. When they came to places where the ladders were badly broken they were obliged to use Eric's body as a support to move the body up. The water was now so high that Stuart could just reach the foot of the ladder. He pulled the lever again and again, and in his excitement shouted like a madman. There was no answer from above. The manhole ladders were still clear. Even as they were, with the broken places, he was strong and vigorous and could climb out. But not with the burden of Eric. At that moment a charred fragment of wood floated down the ore shaft and dropped hissing in the water. He realized that he stood in the presence of death. He offered a prayer for help. He supported Eric as best he could. The water was now above his knees and rapidly rising.

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