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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cabin and down the path to the next cottage of the settlement. Nothing had been seen of Rhena on her supposed return to town. She could not have passed the two men on their way up. Stuart stood in the little path listening, with his heart trembling. The great pines sobbed under the rising wind. Far below the lights of Champion gleamed here and there through the falling snow. And never had Stuart Duncan loved Rhena Dwight as at this moment, when the terror of the fear possessed and choked him that she had wandered out into the treacherous pits and was perhaps even now lying at the bottom of one of them dead or dying. He prayed as he stood there, "My God, my God, save her, for I love her more than my life!"

CHAPTER VIII.

COMPLICATIONS.

Stuart had known every foot of Cornishtown as a boy and was familiar even now with most of the curious little lanes and paths that cut it across and tracked up and down the side of the great hill like the marking of some gigantic game. There was probably no other place just like it in America. The prospecting holes were of various depths. Some of them had caved in at the sides and were shaped like old cellars or cisterns with masses of rubbish at the bottom. Others were wells, anywhere from 50 to 100 feet deep, and especially dangerous in winter, when the snow, lodging on bushes growing about the shaft's mouth, artfully concealed the locality of danger.

It was Stuart's first thought when he calmed himself to think and act that Rhena had attempted to make a short cut by one of the miners' paths from the upper part of the settlement of Cornishtown to Champion and in the dark and confusion caused by the change which snow makes in the appearance of old landmarks had stumbled into one of the shafts. Under this conviction he ran back to the house where Rhena had been and from which he had just come himself, and, begging a lantern, he started out on a path which at first in his terror he had forgotten. He had followed it but a little way when the lantern revealed a small black object right in the center of the path. He stooped eagerly and picked it up. It was a lady's winter glove trimmed with fur at the wrist. He recognized it as Rhena's. He had seen her wearing that kind of a glove a few days before. He placed it in his pocket and went on as fast as he dared, eager and yet dreading with a horror he never felt before the possible discoveries he might make. The miner who had come up with him had gone down to the settlement at Stuart's suggestion to rouse others to come out and join in the search. So he was alone up there in the mysterious shadows of the pine covered slope. Every step he took over the small, barely defined trail was like a step into an unknown land, and yet he was conscious, even as he dwelt with terror upon the strange adventure so suddenly thrust upon him, of going over that very path one warm summer day when a boy only 10 years old, and the smell of the balsams as they gave out their peculiar pungent odor in the warmth of the sun seemed to be in his senses now. Several persons had evidently been over the path that very day, for the snow was trodden down, and the marks of feet were not yet wholly covered by new snow.

Quite a long distance from the place where the glove was found Stuart came to an old stump which marked a giant pine of many years before. The path turned about the foot of this stump, and on the other side of it as he strode up, praying in his heart for mercy and safety to be shown this woman, he saw her lying so still and white that he dared not think what it might mean. She had fallen over a mass of ore that had rolled into the path, and one hand and arm lay stretched out directly over one of the most dangerous pits on the hill. So near had she been to instant death!

With a cry Stuart caught her up. Still, he dared not question whether what he held was alive or dead. He said to himself he would not ask. He knew she was not conscious. He moved now with more of instinct than by sight or reason, feeling his way down the hill. He seemed to feel confident that he would not fall into any of the shafts with this burden, and with a strength and purpose that moved him with even more than his usual determination he went on down, keeping before him the glimmering light of the nearest cottage. Finally he had reached a cross path to the one he had first entered and in which Rhena had met with her accident. The light from the cottage had disappeared. He was now in a hollow or depression of the slope which had sometimes been used by the miners for a rough roadway to one part of the Davis mine, and as he entered it he thought that he could feel rather than see that tracks had recently been made through the hollow. He went down very cautiously. Rhena was still unconscious.

Suddenly a sound came to Stuart from above. He stopped and listened. It was the sound of sleighbells. He could not trust his hearing and listened more intently. Yes, that was too common a sound in Champion every winter to be mistaken. As he listened and looked up into the opaque space filled with snow which fell straight down in the hollow where the wind was cut off a horse emerged like a great shadow and a vague rough outline of something behind.

Stuart shouted, and the next instant he knew that there was only one man in all Champion or De Mott, or for that matter in the entire range, who would dare drive up or down Cornishtown hollow to Davis hill at night and in winter. It was Dr. Saxon, and he had been out to see Jim Blaney and taken the old road up the hollow to save time. It was a common saying in Champion that the doctor would calmly have taken a short cut through the infernal regions rather than go around, especially if there was a patient in great danger on the other side.

The horse was like his master and could pick his way over the hills and through the rough trails like a mountain goat. He had a great gift for getting through snowdrifts, and one of the miners said that he once saw the doctor's horse help his master right the cutter when it tipped over by sitting down on the shaft that was uppermost, while the doctor pushed on the other side. Certain it is that never did a lighthouse gleam on a lost mariner with its saving light more joyfully than did the familiar horse and cutter appear to Stuart as they plunged right out of a great hole and tumbled down almost over him as he stood there holding his precious burden.

"Whoa! Steady there, Ajax!" cried

He saw her lying so still and white.

the voice of the doctor from the cutter, which bounded out of the hole all right and came to sight again, like a snowplow on an engine just after plunging out of a drift.

"Doctor!" cried Stuart. "Thank God! Quick! Miss Dwight! She is dead or dying! I found her unconscious on the upper trail!"

He crowded through the snow up to the side of the cutter and placed Rhena on the seat beside the astonished doctor.

"Well, well, if this doesn't beat the Salvation Army drum all to pieces! I can't escape from practice even in Cornishtown hollow. You take the prize for furnishing material on the spot. Are there any more of the army dead or wounded or dying around here?"

"Hurry, doctor! Save her! Say, is she dying? Is she seriously hurt?"

"Humph! Well, I tell you, Stuart, she's a plucky lass, and it's ten to one that she's dangerously hurt. No; she's not dead." All this time the doctor, who never wasted any breath talking and doing nothing, had been examining the condition of Rhena. "We'll get her right down to the town as fast as possible. Come, jump in and hold her. I can't drive and tend to her too."

Stuart did as directed, and the horse lunged forward at the doctor's word. It seemed to Stuart that the doctor was mad to drive at such a pace.

"Do be careful, doctor! You'll kill us all! Go slower!" Stuart gasped as he held Rhena and breathlessly braced himself against the back of the cutter.

"You've got your hands full without driving," was all the satisfaction Stuart could get, and before he could utter much more remonstrance they were out of the dangerous part of the hollow and had struck into the beginning of the road that led down to Champion. From that point the two men did not speak until the doctor reined Ajax up in front of Rhena's lodging. He had chosen to go right on instead of stopping at any of the cottages where the accommodations for help were so meager. The doctor carried Rhena into her room and left Stuart outside with the cutter. When Saxon finally came out, he was able to bring Stuart good news. It was a case of unconsciousness from a bad fall, but he did not fear any serious consequences.

They were standing by the cutter talking together, when one of the women looked from the door and called the doctor.

"Oh, doctor, will you see if Miss Dwight's glove is out there anywhere? She's lost one of them."

"Shake that robe, Stuart," said the doctor as he flashed the lantern around on the sidewalk and about the cutter. "Like as not it's down in the bottom somewhere. Don't you find it?" he asked, not noticing what Stuart was doing. Getting no answer, he shouted back: "It's not here, ma'am! Must have dropped it on the way down." The woman shut the door, and the doctor said, "Get in, Stuart, and I'll take you home."

Stuart climbed into the cutter without a word. As the doctor seated himself and Ajax was about to make his usual wild plunge up the street Stuart said, "I have Miss Dwight's glove in my pocket, doctor, and I am going to keep it."

"What's that!" exclaimed the doctor. He was nearly twice Stuart's age and had known him all his life. Stuart did not know any one to whom he felt like telling his secret more than to the doctor.

"But what's the good of one glove, Stuart?" The doctor was not quite sure that Stuart wanted to tell him all.

"I mean to have them both," replied Stuart frankly, looking right into the doctor's face. "Old friend, can't you see that I am in love with her and at the very highest point of my life already because of it?"

Stuart spoke louder than he had meant to, forgetting that persons were passing along the sidewalk. Several of the Salvation Army people had gone up to Rhena's lodgings to inquire about her. It is not probable that any heard Stuart, but the doctor suddenly struck Ajax, and the cutter whirled into the square and darted across one of the diagonals. Close by the band stand the doctor pulled up as suddenly as he had started and said abruptly, "I'll wait for you."

"Wait for what?" exclaimed Stuart, astonished.

"Why, I thought may be you might want to go up into the stand and tell all Champion that you were in love with Miss Dwight."

Stuart laughed softly. "I am not ashamed of it. Indeed, doctor, I do feel like shouting it out at times. No, no!" he added as the doctor started Ajax on again and they came out into the main street. "It is a matter of great pride with me. And at the same time I shrink from making it too common. There is no danger. Doctor, will you say, 'God bless you, Stuart,' as you used to sometimes when other events in my life came on?"

"God bless you, Stuart! Aye, aye, 'that belongs to be,' as my Cornishmen say when they mean it ought to be so. You've chosen the best, plucklest and most character endowed woman in all Champion, or the state for that matter. Well, well, I knew it all the time! You and Eric think I'm so busy that I don't have time to notice anything. But that's because I see so much more than you do in a given time." There was a short pause. "If I were you, Stuart, I wouldn't keep that glove very long. It isn't just fair this cold weather."

"Thank you, doctor. I have been thinking of that," replied Stuart.

He had grown very thoughtful suddenly. His life had opened out into another possibility with this new experience. He was conscious of its bearing upon all the rest of the problems that knocked at his heart and mind for answers, and when he bade the doctor good night he went into the house thrilled through with the most profound conviction and persuasion that his life would shape this way or that according to the response of Rhena Dwight's soul to his. He was startled as for the first time he realized how strong his feeling was and how little he knew of hers. What could she be to him with all the social difference between them? It is true he had come to a place where social differences counted for very little with him, but how could he tell what she might think now that her life moved on the plane of Salvation Army methods? And then there was his money and all. She had deliberately moved out from the world of wealth and fashion in which he still remained, of which he was yet a part. They were separated in this way by a great gulf of difference. On the other hand, he reflected, they had one great and common bond of sympathy in their Christian faith. After all, was not that stronger than anything else? What were conditions or artificial social distinctions by the side of the all powerful oneness of spirit which disciples of the Master possessed in common? It was with that last thought on his heart that he finally went to rest.

He did not speak to Louise or his aunt of the evening's adventure when he saw them in the morning. His statement of the evening before concerning his feelings toward Rhena had driven the two women into a position of hostility to him that did not find immediate expression in words, but was very apparent none the less. Louise was angry to think that her attempts to deceive Rhena might and probably would result in nothing. Aunt Royal ignored the subject definitely, but there was no mistaking her entire opposition to Stuart's present attitude. It was true she did not understand him. Stuart was too engrossed in his perplexities and plans and too much absorbed in the new life to feel all this very deeply, and yet it showed him how squarely his new life was henceforth to conflict with the old.

It was two days after that that Stuart, Eric and Andrew met again to talk over matters, this time at Eric's cottage. Rhena had recovered. She was up and doing part of her work. Stuart had called to inquire after her, but had not seen her. He could not help feeling that when he did have an opportunity to speak it would be an eventful meeting for him. He had inherited a large portion of his father's abrupt determination of conduct and action. All this faculty, intensified in another direction under the influence of his spiritual awakening, burned as strong as in the old Stuart, only for another purpose. Paul was Saul Christianized. And the new Stuart was as likely to act in matters that required decision with as much quickness as the old Stuart, only with a larger and truer vision of the meaning of the action.

The three men met with a more serious and thoughtful bearing than at the other meeting. Every day in Champion now intensified the situation and increased the sum total of suffering. There was no outward sign of the union weakening. The winter had set in definitely, and it looked very much as if the mines had closed down for the season. Stuart remembered one winter when the mines had closed for a month through action of the owners in order to force up the price of ore. That was when he was a boy. He could still remember something of the suffering at that time. Now it promised to be infinitely worse.

"Eric, you have more influence with the men than any one on the ranges. Can't you persuade the union to do something to arrive at a decision?" asked Stuart a little vaguely. He was feeling around after answers to a thousand questions, and he started the talk aimlessly because he was preoccupied.

"Well, what can I do? The owners are the ones to arrive at a decision. Can't you persuade them to agree to our demands and your own promise of $2 a day?" replied Eric, who never hesitated to say what he felt no matter how abrupt it might seem.

"No; I have no influence that way with the other owners. You ought to see some of the letters I get from Cleveland. I tell you the owners will not give in. The whole situation is horrible. Sometimes, Eric, Andrew, I feel as if the men were destitute of all sense. What right have a third or a fourth of them to keep the rest from work because all cannot get the same wages?"

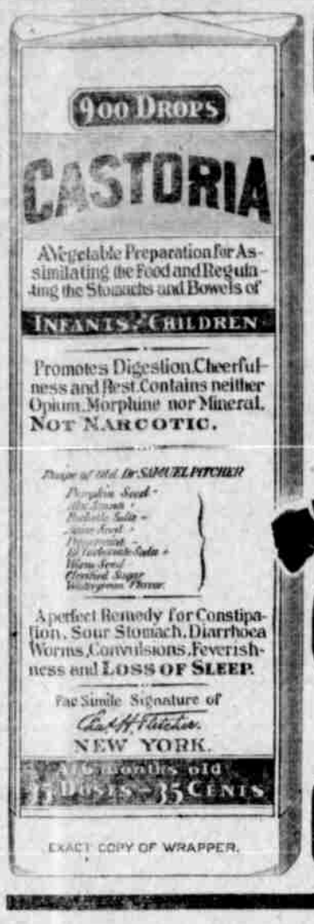
"They don't look at it that way. The principle is with them all based on the right or wrong side of the demand for the $2. At the same time, as I said the other day, I look at the strike from another point of view. I am ready to acknowledge it is a miserable way to try to get justice done. The men can never make up what they have lost by this idleness. But, good God, Stuart," ejaculated Eric, hobbling to the window and looking out on the snow covered hills just back of the cottage, "what other way is there if the owners refuse to listen to appeals and arbitration? Are we to submit indefinitely to starvation wages [illegible] ourselves? Of course I look at it [illegible] a workingman's standpoint. Pulled down to its simplest terms, the men don't see anything but reason in asking that a business like the ore industry, that has made a few men princely rich, ought to divide up its profits more fairly and make a good many persons more comfortable instead of making a select few uncomfortably wealthy."

"Do you believe a man can be uncomfortably wealthy?" asked Andrew, with a smile, as if he believed it himself.

"You don't need to go outside this room to find one," answered Stuart soberly. "What good can I do with all my money in a case like this? I seem to be as helpless as either of you."

"No, you're not. You can relieve a great deal of distress. Money is a great power in that way."

"But look here, Eric. Isn't this the situation? Here are 5,000 men out on a strike. A thousand of them have been offered their demands. They have refused out of sympathy for the rest, who will never get what they ask, for I can't compel the other companies to do what I think is the right thing. Now, then, these men are faced with starvation or at least with great suffering this winter. Shall I say to them practically: 'Never mind; I have money. I will take care of you indefinitely or until the money is gone?' It seems to me that the thousand men ought to go to work if they have an offer at their own terms. What do you think, Andrew?"



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