

* * The Story Page * *

Lost and Found.

"Greater love hath no man than this, than a man lay down his life for his friends."

George Brunton pondered long over the words. Their meaning baffled him, yet he knew far more about the matter of laying down one's life than most boys of his age. He had risked his life and lost his health and his power for earning for his widowed mother, all for the sake of a lad with whom he had been on almost unfriendly terms.

There seemed but scant comfort for him in the text that his New Testament opened at.

"It wasn't love that made me plunge into the river when Tom Perley skated into the air-hole," he mused. "Any fellow with a spark of courage would have done what I did. Strange," he added bitterly, "that he should go scot free afterwards while I am laid by most likely for life."

The lad did not realize that Tom Perley's strong physique had been far better calculated to stand the shock of the icy bath than his own ill-nourished body. In addition, he had been suffering with a heavy cold on the very day of the accident.

"I'll always be a burden," he sighed pitifully, as he straightened himself painfully for the night; "yet there seems to be nothing ailing me but a horrible weakness."

The tears gathered in his eyes as he buried his face in his pillow.

Just before he fell asleep a new thought struck him. "If he'd done it for love it might have counted," he said to himself; "but I never did like Tom, and maybe if I'd known what it would cost me, I might have left him drown. It couldn't possibly count," he murmured as he fell asleep.

The lad had been very brave, very heroic. His reward was a curious, nameless disease that almost emptied his life of happiness.

Gradually the memory of the deed died away. Those who had been loudest in their praise, were quick now to hint that his mysterious disease was only a form of laziness. Their careless words seared the very soul of the sick boy. For the first time he rejoiced in the isolated situation of his poor home.

Dr. Proctor, who was their nearest neighbor, dropped in sometimes, and confessed the powerlessness of his skill in the case. He was a haggard-looking man with gentle, sympathetic ways. The family were well known to him, and Mrs. Brunton was considered the best nurse in the district.

Some day soon Dr. Levison, a great city surgeon, was coming to the village for the purpose of performing an operation upon Dr. Proctor's wife. George guessed that his friend would look less haggard when the operation was safely over. The doctor had promised to bring the great surgeon to the sick boy. Both felt that it was the one chance for recovery.

Sally and baby Susan slept in the loft above George's bed-room. They were his delight and comfort as they played the livelong day by his bedside. Sally's keen, bright mind, and Susan's bobbing golden head and winning smiles were his constant joy. He could remember a time when he thought of them almost indifferently as "the children," but now they had woven the tendrils of affection so closely about his heart that he loved them better than anything else in the world.

One blustery winter night Mrs. Brunton came to his bedside. "I can't tell you how sorry I am son," she said, with the glisten of a tear in her faded eye, "but Dr. Proctor has just sent word that they will need me for the operation tonight."

The face of the boy lit up with sudden hope. "But, oh, my son," the woman sobbed, "the great doctor will not be here to see you. He is coming on the late train, and he leaves in the early morning. Dr. Proctor says he will talk over the case with him, but that is all he can promise."

The boy closed his eyes wearily. He was too sick at heart to say a word. His only hope had been shattered.

Mrs. Brunton forbore speaking again, but her tears fell fast as she filled the kitchen stove that the little house might keep warm and cosy for the night. Then she hurried out lest she should keep the doctor's messenger waiting.

A heavy storm was fast rising. Gusts of wind drove handfuls of hail against the window by the lad's bed, as he lay in mute misery. The thought of the helpless children in the loft overhead began to torment him. How powerless he was to aid them should danger of any kind arise! The roar of the fire in the kitchen chimney made him unwontedly nervous. At last from sheer exhaustion he fell into a deep sleep. When he awoke the room seemed to be full of smoke. A faint crackling sound overhead told the rest of the story. The house was on fire! The great fire in the poorly built chimney had done its work.

For a second he lay supinely in his bed. It was weeks

since he had set foot on the floor. Then, as the realization of the fearful death that awaited the children dawned on him, he made a grim face and threw himself out of bed.

It seemed as if Sally's bright eyes were looking straight into his, and as if a flame-colored aureole were nearing Susan's golden head. He scrambled over the floor, half walking, half crawling, till he gained the ladder that led to the loft. There was no stir above but the crackle of the fire. A little tongue-like flame licked around the open hatchway!

It was but the work of a second to climb the ladder. All his weakness was leaving him now. He gained the loft and stood upright in the stifling heat. The wooden shelf that served as mantel was already in flames, and the wood-work in floor and furniture was fast catching.

The children had not stirred as yet; the thick smoke had lulled them to unconsciousness.

He shook Sally roughly and bade her waken the baby. Then, throwing up the window, he peered into the outer world. There was no sign of life in any direction. The night was wilder than before, and a great snowbank had drifted close by. The intruding current of cold air made the flames blaze brightly. A yellow gleam danced towards the bed in which the frightened children lay.

Sally pinched herself in order to make sure that she was awake. It did not seem possible that it could really be her sick brother who was moving about the room. She was still more alarmed when he lifted her from the bed, wrapped her in the thick quilt, carried her to the window, and, with excellent aim, tossed her into the great snowdrift. A moment later, he pressed a kiss on baby Susan's forehead, wound her tightly in a blanket, and threw her to the same place of safety.

Then all his new-born strength deserted him. He fell helplessly to the floor. All escape was cut off for him. The flames had met across the hatchway now and were hurrying on to the window, where he lay. His work was over, but the little ones were safe.

"Lord, I did love them," he said, reverently, as the text he had read at bed-time seemed to rise questioningly before him.

He knew the meaning now. He understood the all-compelling love that had prompted the Saviour of the world to lay down his life. The fire was creeping very close, yet a feeling of unspeakable peace was stealing over him.

A fretful wail from baby Susan roused him.

"Susan will freeze out there," Sally cried, pitifully. She had come under the window. Her blue eyes were wild with terror.

"Jump quick, brother!" she shouted. "Susan will freeze to death unless you save us again," she entreated.

The boy nerved himself for a last effort and leaped from the sill. Wonder of wonders, he reached the ground unhurt!

The children crept close to him and hugged him tenderly. The flames were shooting from the window now, and Sally guessed how near he had been to a horrible death. The lad looked about him wildly. His work was by no means over. Where should he find shelter for these helpless little ones?

It was a good quarter of a mile across the fields to the doctor's house, and he knew they could never face the howling storm. They would assuredly perish miserably by the way.

A strange exhilaration seemed to possess him. He would fight all the elements, if need be, to preserve these lives that God had given him. Already a plan unfolded itself. He began to burrow a great hole in the snow.

Sally was quick to aid him.

"Are you going to put us there?" she asked, shrewdly.

In a few moments, both children were placed securely in the very heart of the drift. Their heads alone rose above the surface. The flaming house was so close at hand that the air seemed tempered to almost summer mildness.

Then over the fields, across lots, over fences, sped the sick boy until he reached the doctor's house, where flitting figures behind the blinds told of life within. The great surgeon was partaking of a midnight repast, and Dr. Proctor, his face radiant with happiness, was ministering to his needs. The operation was safely over.

As they chatted, the barefooted, nightshirtd lad burst in upon them with his wild story. Mrs. Brunton, who came to the head of the stairway to ask the cause of the disturbance, blanched as if she had seen a ghost, as her son staggered into the room below. His incoherent words conveyed but little meaning, but the doctor was easily persuaded to drive down the road and look after the children. It was a happiness to him to serve anyone that night.

Dr. Levison, meanwhile, was studying the boy intently. He led him gently to a great arm-chair, and bade him sup a cup of hot cocoa, while he busied himself with his burnt and frost-bitten feet. When, presently, the lad drowsed, he spread an afghan over him with ten-

der care. He was already familiar with the particulars of the case, and had keenly regretted his inability to make a personal call to the sufferer.

Even the arrival of the excited children did not disturb George's slumber. Mrs. Brunton gathered the little ones passionately to her breast and drew the story from them.

When they had finished, she knelt by her son's side and hid her face. The great surgeon, who had been listening attentively to their tale, turned sharp aside to the window.

At a sound from the sick-room, the mother ran quickly upstairs, and Dr. Proctor, who had been tucking up the children in buffalo robes on the sofa, turned curiously to his friend.

"What do you think of him?" he asked.

"I think the last shock has counteracted the effect of the first," answered the great physician. "Good food and nursing are all he needs now, and, with your permission, I will take him to my private hospital. A lad who can lay down his life for others, as he has twice done, must be saved for the world."

"For all these mercies may the Lord make us truly thankful!" said Dr. Proctor, unconsciously repeating the grace before meals of his childhood. He felt that the surgeon's visit was having blessed results.

In the weeks of hospital life that followed, George Brunton won his way back to health and strength. One day as he walked out with his new-found friend, a thought occurred to him. Perhaps after all, he had not been deemed worthy to make the great sacrifice. So forcibly did this thought appeal to him that he repeated half aloud the words of the puzzling text, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Surely this greater love had been his, and yet—

Dr. Levison heard his half-uttered words, and easily divined his thought.

"My boy," he said, "you have learned all the lesson that these words hold, and for you, as for few of us on earth, there rings a new meaning in another verse of Holy Writ," and very gently he repeated, "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it again."—Zion's Herald.

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Two Mothers, Two Methods, Two Men.

BY MARTHA CLARK RANKIN.

In a certain New England town, thirty years ago, there lived two families whose outward circumstances were so similar as to be the occasion for frequent comment. They lived in the same street, in houses of about the same size and value; there could not have been more than a hundred dollars difference in their yearly incomes. Each family consisted of father, mother, two daughters and one son.

If you had entered the two homes you would have noticed that they were about equally well furnished, that the children were about equally well dressed. Yet, in spite of this, you would soon have felt that the two homes were radically unlike. The difference was in the mothers, who were directly opposite in character, and, in each case, the mother's influence gave the home its tone.

Mrs. Brown was an earnest, God-fearing woman, whose motto was, "Do what is right, whether it is easy or hard." Her children were trained to go regularly and punctually to church and school, whenever they were able, whether they felt like it or not. They were taught that each day brought duties which must not be postponed without sufficient reason. They were shown that self-indulgence was weakening and demoralizing, that self-control would strengthen and ennoble their characters. "I forgot" or "I didn't feel like it" were not acceptable excuses in that family.

Mrs. Smith was an indolent woman, who never did anything disagreeable if she could possibly get out of it. She let her children have their own way because it was too much trouble to make them mind. They went to church and school when they felt like it, and lessons and other duties were put off till the last minute and then rushed through in a hurry, the mother never troubling herself to interfere. She loved her children in a selfish, short-sighted way, but she never seemed to think of their future and the trouble and unhappiness which they would surely have to reap as a result of her careless sowing.

It so happened that the two young men, Edward Brown and Henry Smith, were ready to begin their business careers at the same time. They secured similar positions in the two banks of the town, beginning at the bottom of the ladder, with a good chance of climbing if their services proved to be of sufficient value. They started upon their new duties in quite different frames of mind, as would naturally be expected by any one who heard the parti-

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