

IN HIS STEPS.

"What Would
Jesus Do?"

By Charles M. Sheldon.

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SYNOPSIS OF PRECEDING CHAPTERS.

This story began in the "News" of Oct. 7.—The Rev. Henry Maxwell, minister of a fashionable congregation, suddenly becomes impressed with the holiness of the life he and his people are leading, and with a number of his leading members, he makes a vow to conduct his life on the principle of what Jesus would do under similar circumstances. The sacrifices each is compelled to make to regulate his or her modern day existence to the rule of "What would Jesus do?" forms the theme of the story. Among those who follow the minister are Rachel Winslow, the soprano of his choir, Virginia Page, a wealthy heiress, Edward Norman, publisher of an "up-to-date" newspaper, Alexander Powers, a railroad superintendent, and others whose lives are powerfully affected by their determination to walk "In His Steps."

[CONCLUDED.]

CHAPTER XII.

"Yet lackest thou one thing. Sell all that thou hast and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven. And come, follow me."

When Henry Maxwell began to speak to the souls crowded into the hall that night, it is doubtful if he had ever before faced such an audience in his life. It is quite certain that the city of Raymond did not contain such a variety of humanity. Not even the Rectory at its best could furnish so entirely out of the reach of the church and all religious and even Christian influences.

What did he talk about? He had already decided that point. He told in the simplest language he could command some of the results of obedience to the pledge as it had been taken in Raymond. Every man and woman in that audience knew something about Jesus Christ. They all had some idea of His character, and, however much they had grown bitter toward the forms of Christian ecclesiasticism or the social system, they preserved some standard of right and truth and what little some of them still retained was taken from the person of the peasant of Galilee.

So they were interested in what Maxwell said. "What would Jesus do?" He began to apply the question to the social problem in general after finishing the story of Raymond. The audience was respectfully attentive. It was more than that. It was genuinely interested. As Mr. Maxwell went on faces all over the hall leaned forward in a way very seldom seen in church audiences or anywhere else, except among workmen or the people of the street when once they are thoroughly aroused. "What would Jesus do?" Suppose that were the motto not only of the churches, but of the business men, the politicians, the

newspapers, the workmen, the society people. How long would it take, under such a standard of conduct, to revolutionize the world? What was the trouble with the world? It was suffering from selfishness. No one ever lived who had succeeded in overcoming selfishness like Jesus. If men followed Him, regardless of results, the world would at once begin to enjoy a new life.

Henry Maxwell never knew how much it meant to hold the respectful attention of that hall full of diseased and sinful humanity. The bishop and Dr. Bruce, sitting there, looking on, seeing many faces that represented scores of creeds, hatreds, of the social order, desperate narrowness and selfishness, marveled that even so soon, under the influence of the settlement life, the softening process had begun to lessen the bitterness of hearts, many of which had grown bitter from neglect and indifference to a new life.

And still in spite of the outward show of respect of the speaker, no one, not even the bishop, had any true conception of the pent up feeling in that room that night. Among the men who had heard of the meeting and had responded to the invitation were 20 or 30 out of work, who had strolled past the settlement that afternoon, read the notice of the meeting and had come in out of curiosity and to escape the chill east wind. It was a bitter night, and the saloons were full, but in that whole district of over 20,000 souls, with the exception of the saloons, there was not a door open to the people except the clean, pure, Christian door of the settlement. Where would a man without a home or without work or without friends naturally go unless to a saloon?

It had been the custom at the settlement for a free and open discussion to follow an open meeting of this kind, and when Henry Maxwell finished and sat down the bishop, who presided tonight, rose and made the announcement that any man in the hall was at liberty to ask questions to open out his feelings or declare his convictions, always with the understanding that whoever took part was to observe the simple rules that governed parliamentary bodies and obey the three minute rule, which, by common consent, would be enforced on account of the numbers present.

Instantly a number of voices from men who had been at previous meetings of this kind exclaimed, "Consent, consent!"

The bishop sat down, and immediately a man near the middle of the hall rose and began to speak.

"I want to say that what Mr. Maxwell has said tonight comes pretty close to me. I know Jack Manning, the fellow he told about, who died at his house. I worked on next case to his in a printer's shop in Philadelphia for two years. Jack was a good fellow. He lent me \$5 once when I was in a hole, and I never got a chance to pay it back. He moved to New York, owing to a change in the management of the office that threw him out, and I never saw him again. When the linotype machine came in, I was one of the men to go out, just as he did. I have been out most of the time since. They say inventions are a good thing. I won't al-

ways see it myself, but I suppose I'm prejudiced. A man naturally is when he loses a steady job because a machine takes his place. About this Christianity he tells about, it's all right, but I never expect to see any such sacrifice on the part of church people. So far as my observation goes, they're just as selfish and as greedy for money or worldly success as anybody. I except the bishop and Dr. Bruce and a few others, but I never found much difference between men of the world, as they're called, and church members when it came to business and money making. One class is just as bad as another there."

"Cries of 'That's so!' 'You're right!' 'Of course!' interrupted the speaker, and the minute he sat down two men who were on their feet for several seconds before the first speaker was through began to talk at once.

The bishop called them to order and indicated which was entitled to the floor. The man who remained standing began eagerly:

"This is the first time I was ever in here, and maybe it'll be the last. Fast is, I'm about at the end of my string. I've tramped this city for work until I'm sick. I'm in plenty of company. Say, I'd like to ask a question of the minister if it's fair. May I?"

"That's for Mr. Maxwell to say," said the bishop.

"By all means," replied Mr. Maxwell quickly. "Of course I will not promise to answer it to the gentleman's satisfaction."

"This is my question." The man leaned forward and stretched out a long arm, with a certain dramatic force that grew naturally enough out of his condition as a human being. "I want to know what Jesus would do in my case? I haven't had a stroke of work for two months. I've got a wife and three children, and I love them as much as if I was worth a million dollars. I've been living off a little earnings I saved up during the World's fair jobs I got. I'm a carpenter by trade, and I've tried every way I know to get a job. You say we ought to take for our motto, 'What would Jesus do?' What would He do if He was out of work like me? I can't be somebody else and ask the question. I want to work. I'd give anything to grow tired of working ten hours a day the way I know to get a job. You say we ought to take for our motto, 'What would Jesus do?' I've got to live and my wife and my children. But how? What would Jesus do? You say that's the question we all ought to ask."

Henry Maxwell sat there staring at the great sea of faces all intent on his, and no answer to this man's question seemed, for the time being, to be possible. "O God!" his heart prayed. "This is a question that brings up the entire social problem in all its perplexing entanglement of human wrongs and its present condition, contrary to every desire of God for a human being's welfare. Is there any condition more awful than for a man in good health, able and eager to work, with no means of honest livelihood unless he does work, actually unable to get anything to do and driven to one of three things—begging for charity, the hands of friends or strangers or suicide or starvation? What would Jesus do? It was a fair question for the man to ask. It was the only question he could ask, supposing him to be a disciple of Christ, but what a question for any man to be obliged to ask under such conditions!"

All this and more did Henry Maxwell ponder. All the others were thinking in the same way. The bishop sat there with a look so stern and sad that it was not hard to tell how the question moved him. Dr. Bruce had his head bowed. The human problem had never seemed to him so tragic as since he had taken the pledge and left his church to enter the settlement. What would Jesus do? It was a terrible question, and still the man stood there, tall and gaunt and almost terrible, with his arm stretched out in an appeal which grew every second in meaning.

At length Mr. Maxwell spoke: "Is there any man in the room who is a Christian disciple who has been in

this condition and has tried to do as Jesus would do? If so, such a man can answer his question better than I can." There was a moment's hush over the room, and then a man near the front of the hall slowly rose. He was an old man, and the hand he laid on the back of the bench in front of him trembled as he spoke:

"I think I can safely say that I have many times been in just such a condition and have always tried to be a Christian under all conditions. I don't know that I have always asked this question, 'What would Jesus do?' when I have been out of work, but I do know I have tried to be His disciple at all times. Yes," the man went on, with a sad smile that was more pathetic to the bishop and Mr. Maxwell than the young man's grim despair—"yes, I have begged, and I have been to the charity organizations, and I have done everything when out of a job, except steal and lie, in order to get food and fuel. I don't know that Jesus would have done some of the things I have been obliged to do for a living, but I know I have never knowingly done wrong when out of work. Sometimes I think maybe He would have starved sooner than beg. I don't know."

The old man's voice trembled, and he looked around the room timidly. A silence followed, broken by a fierce voice from a large, black haired, heavily bearded man who sat three seats from the bishop. The minute he spoke nearly every man in the hall leaned forward eagerly. The man who had asked the question, "What would Jesus do in my case?" slowly sat down and asked the man next to him, "Who's that?"

"That's Carlson, the socialistic leader. Now you'll hear something."

"This is all bosh, to my mind," began Carlson, while his great, bristling beard shook with the deep, inward anger of the man. "The whole of our system is at fault. What we call civilization is rotten to the core. There is no use trying to hide it or cover it up. We live in an age of trusts and combines and capitalistic greed that means simply death to thousands of innocent men, women and children. I thank God, if there is a God, which I very much doubt, that I, for one, have never dared to marry and try to have a home. Home! Talk of hell! Is there any bigger than the one this man with his three children has on his hands right this minute? And he's only one out of thousands, and yet this city and every other big city in this country has its thousands of professed Christians who have all the luxuries and comforts and who go to church Sundays and sing their hymns about giving all to Jesus and bearing the cross and following Him all the way and being saved! I don't say that there aren't some good men and women among them, but let the minister who has spoken to us here tonight go into any one of a dozen aristocratic churches I could name and propose to the members to take any such pledge as the one he's proposed here and see how quick the people would laugh at him for a fool or a crank or a fanatic. Oh, no! That's not the remedy. That can't ever amount to anything. We've got to have new start in the way of government. The whole thing needs reconstructing. I don't look for any reform worth anything to come out of the churches. They are not with the people. They are with the aristocrats, with the men of money. The trusts and monopolies have their

greatest men in the churches. The ministers as a class are their slaves. What we need is a system that shall start from the common basis of socialism founded on the rights of the common people."

Carlson had evidently forgotten all about the three minute rule and was launching himself into a regular oration that meant, in his usual surroundings, before his usual audience, an hour at least, when the man just behind him pulled him down unceremoniously and rose. Carlson was angry at first and threatened a little disturbance, but the bishop reminded him of the rule, and he subsided, with several mutterings in his beard, while the next speaker began with a very strong eulogy on the value of the single tax as a genuine remedy for all the social ills. He was followed by a man who made a bitter attack on the churches and ministers and declared that the two great obstacles in the way of all true reform were the courts and the ecclesiastical machines.

When he sat down, a man who bore every mark of being a street laborer sprang to his feet and poured out a perfect torrent of abuse against the corporations, especially the railroads. The minutes his time was up a big, heavy fellow who said he was a metal worker by trade, claimed the floor and declared that the remedy for the social wrongs was trades unionism. This, he said, would bring on the millennium for labor more than anything else. The next speaker was a woman, a young one, why so many persons were out of employment and condemned inventions as the works of the devil. He was loudly applauded by the rest of the company.

Finally the bishop called time on the "free for all" and asked Rachel to sing. Rachel Winslow had grown into a very strong, healthy, humble Christian during that wonderful year in Raymond dating from the Sunday when she first took the pledge to do as Jesus would do, and her great talent of song had been fully consecrated to the service of her Master. When she began to sing tonight at this settlement meeting, she had never prayed more deeply for results to come from her voice—the voice which she now regarded as the Master's, to be used for Him.

Surely this audience had never before heard such freedom and gladness as if it were a foretaste of salvation itself.

Carlson, with his great black bearded face, absorbed the music with the deep love of it peculiar to his nationality, and a tear ran over his cheek and glistened in his beard as his face softened and became almost noble in its aspect. The man out of work who had wanted to know what Jesus would do in his place sat with grimy hand on the back of the bench in front of him, with his mouth partly open, his great tragedy for the moment forgotten. The song while it lasted was food and work and warmth and union with his wife and babes once more. The man who had spoken so fiercely against the churches and the ministers sat with his head erect at first, with a look of stolid resistance, as if he stubbornly resented the introduction into the exercises of anything that was even remotely connected with the church or its form of worship, but gradually he yielded to the power that was swaying the hearts

of all the persons in that room, and a look of sad thoughtfulness crept over his face.

The bishop said to himself that night while Rachel was singing that if the humanity could only have the 4000 talents and professional talents and so forth, the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth would be a matter of time. Why, he cried in his heart as he listened, "has the world's great treasures been so often held far from the poor or fingers capable of stirring the gift as something with which to make among the gifted ones of the world? Shall there be no giving of this great gift as well as of others?"

And Henry Maxwell again, as before, called up that other audience in the Rectory, with increasing longing for the larger spread of the new discipline. What had he seen and heard at the settlement burned into him deeper than the belief that the problem of the city would be solved if the Christians in it would follow Jesus as He gave commandment. But what of this great man of humanity, neglected and sinful, the very kind of humanity the Salvation came to save, with all its mistakes and narrowness, its wretchedness and hopelessness above all, its unequalled bitterness toward the church? That was what smote Henry Maxwell deepest.

Was the church, then, so far from the Master that the people no longer found Him in the church? Was it true that the church had lost its power over the very ages of humanity which it reached to the greatest numbers? How much was true in what the socialistic leader said about the uselessness of looking to the church for reform or redemption because of the selfishness and aristocracy of its members?

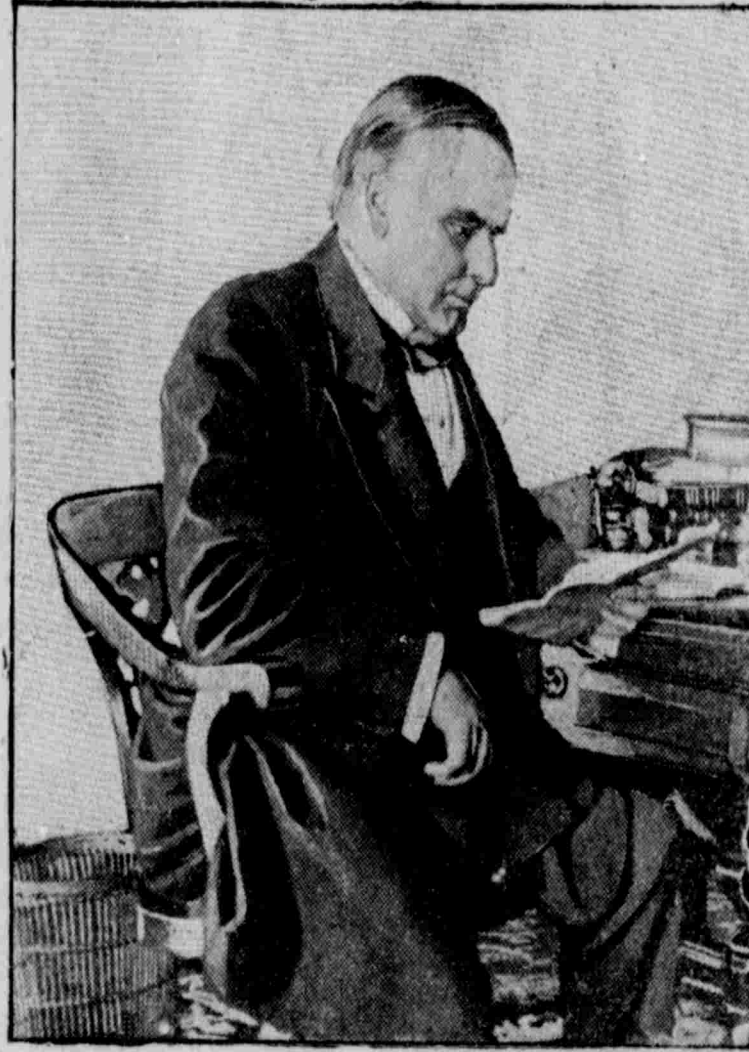
He was more and more impressed with the appalling fact that the comparatively few men in the hall, now being held quiet for awhile by Rachel's voice, represented thousands of others just like them, to whom a church as a minister stood for as a source of comfort or happiness. Ought it to be so? If the church members were all doing as Jesus would do, could it remain the street armies of men would walk the streets for jobs and hundreds of them cure the church and thousands of them find the church their best friend? How far were the Christians responsible for this human problem that was so tragically illustrated right in this hall tonight?

Was it true that the great city churches would, as a rule, refuse to walk in Jesus' steps so closely as to suffer, actually or suffer for His sake?

Henry Maxwell kept asking this question even after Rachel had finished singing and the meeting had come to an end, after a social gathering which was very informal. He asked it while the little company of residents, with the Raymond visitors, were having a detention service, as the custom of the settlement was. He asked it during a conference with the bishop and Dr. Bruce which lasted until 1 o'clock. He used it as he knelt again before sleeping and poured out his soul in his petition for spiritual baptism on the church in America such as it had never before. He asked it the first thing in the morning and all through the day as he went over the settlement district and saw the life of the people so far removed from the life abundantly. Would the church members would the Christians not only in the churches of Chicago, but throughout the country, refuse to walk in His steps if, in order to do so, they must actually take up a cross and follow Him?

This was the one question that continually demanded answer. He had planned, when he came to the city, to return to Raymond and be in his own pulpit on Sunday, but Friday morning he had received at the settlement a call from the pastor of one of the largest

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