

LaGrande Evening Observer

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Published evenings, except Sunday, at 1416 Adams Avenue, La Grande, Oregon. The Observer-Star published every Friday. Entered at the Postoffice at La Grande, Oregon, as Second Class Mail Matter under act of March 3, 1879.

OFFICIAL PAPER OF UNION COUNTY AND THE CITY OF LA GRANDE

MEMBER ASSOCIATED PRESS
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By Carrier
Daily, per month in advance.....\$5.00
Daily, per six months in advance.....\$25.00
Daily, single copy.....10c
By Mail
Daily, per month in advance.....50c
Daily, per six months in advance.....\$2.50
Daily, per year in advance.....\$5.00
Weekly Observer-Star, per year.....\$2.00

ADVERTISING RATES
Display, foreign, per column inch.....40c
Display, local, per column inch.....40c
Time contract rates on application.

FINISH THE WORK—"Be strong and of good courage, and do it; fear not, nor be dismayed, for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee. He will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work." 1 Chron. 28:29.

He Wrote One of Best Sellers and Is Glad He Got \$3,000, Not Million

TOPEKA, Kan., Jan. 1 (NEA Special)—Thirty years ago Dr. Charles M. Sheldon, Topeka clergyman, wrote the religious novel "In His Steps."
Today, more than 22,000,000 copies of "In His Steps" have been sold. It is one of the "best sellers" of all time.

A royalty of but a nickel a copy would have made the author a millionaire. Because of copyright law, Dr. Sheldon's actual money profits total less than \$3,000.

"I'm glad of it," he said. "For me to have made a million from 'In His Steps' wouldn't have been very Christlike."

"I haven't a single solitary regret."

Had he wanted to get rich, he added, he never would have entered the ministry in the first place.

Read Around The World
Fifty different English editions of "In His Steps" have been published. The work has been translated into 21 different languages and dialects, has been produced in dramatic form on the stage, and even has been set to music as a church cantata.

Few if any novels in all literary history have enjoyed a larger or more widespread popularity. And yet—
"With all of the 22,000,000 copies," Dr. Sheldon declared, in the study of his college avenue home in Topeka, "I never have received a penny of real royalty and have been paid in all considerably less than \$3,000 in purely voluntary gifts from four publishers."

A Romance of Heart Life
The story of how it happened that the book never was copyrighted properly, and thus became without cost the property of any publisher who fancied it, and how it happens now that its author actually is happy at the twist of fate which deprived him of riches, is one of literary history's most romantic tales.

Soon after Dr. Sheldon assumed his present pastorate at the Central Congregational church in Topeka, back in January, 1895, he adopted a new plan for Sunday evening services in the church.

"Young people were not interested in sermons and didactics in those days," Dr. Sheldon recalls now, "but they were interested intensely in life. So I wrote of life, to interest them and keep them in the church."

New Way of Preaching
During the winter of 1891, Dr. Sheldon read the story of Richard Bruce to his congregation, each chapter serving as a Sunday evening sermon and being followed by a general discussion.

The novel way of preaching Christ met with approval, and the additional books to "In His Steps," in 1896. In this novel, minister, railroad shop superintendent, college president, merchant surgeon, author, helms and others were placed in quest of a life purpose that would be in His steps.

Encouraged by the interest his hearers manifested in the story, Dr. Sheldon offered it to several Chicago publishing houses, all of which declined it.

Then he submitted it to the editor of the Advance, a congregational church weekly periodical published in Chicago. In 1896 "In His Steps" began to appear in this publication as a serial.

Instead of sending two complete copies of the novel to the copyright bureau in Washington, however, the management of the Advance forwarded only a part of one. No copyright lines were carried along with the serialized version.

These blunders resulted in the granting of a defective copyright to Dr. Sheldon, which was not discovered, however, until after the novel had been published in book form, a small edition of 100,000 copies, paperbound.

An unusual demand for the story attracted the attention of publishers generally. The irregularity of Dr. Sheldon's copyright was found immediately, and the work was thus thrown on the open market, to be seized upon eagerly by sixteen different publishers within three months.

Similarly, the lack of an international copyright permitted the wave of popularity of the book to sweep across the Atlantic to England, where twenty different publishers began issuing editions almost simultaneously.

Since then "In His Steps" has been translated into almost every important language. There are some editions even in the dialects of West Africa.

Next to the Bible it is doubtful if any book has had as large a circulation as "In His Steps" during the last thirty years.

As Dr. Sheldon, the author, has had an opportunity, neither has he had a desire to cash in on the veritable gold mine the novel, properly copyrighted, might have been.

"After all," he reasoned, "the

main thing about a book is to have it read, and not particularly to have it reap an income for its author. If I had wished to reap big profits, I never would have entered the ministry in the first place.
"Too, I feel the fact that the copyright was found defective undoubtedly increased the circulation of the novel. Publishing houses that might never have touched it otherwise took it up and made it available to common people everywhere.
"It would have been wholly out of keeping with the spirit of the work for a pastor to write a story about what he believes Jesus would do if He were on earth, and then earn \$1,000,000 or more from the sale of it."
Dr. Sheldon accounts for the wide circulation of the book by asserting that "nothing ever has been or ever will be more interesting to people than religion."
Dr. Sheldon will be 70 years of

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use February 26, 1927. Today he speaks firmly and deals not in platitudes. He has well-defined convictions, and the courage of them. In other words, Dr. Sheldon continually asks himself the question he puts to the imaginary characters in his world famous story, "What Would Jesus Do?" and he lives as he believes a minister should live if he is to follow accurately in His steps.

Happy is the land where the most urgent problem is how to reduce one's weight.

Gunboat activities in China show, among other things, that with all her backwardness that country has kept her rivers navigable.

Drinking one's health on New Year's is more than ever out of style. If there's much drinking done in this bootleg age it is likely to be to one's death.

The fact that the Associated Press said New Year's resolutions were out of style is not going to decrease swearing off. It never has been in style—merely a topic for January conversation.

Someone has congratulated us on reading that the Aimee case is not, after all, to be dropped—insinuating that 1927 will be a new year. Don't congratulate us; console us. Subscribers may read or pass by, but think of the poor proof-reader who has to read the stuff whether she wishes to or not.

The Legion New Year's frolic, contrary to the law of averages with shows, proved all that was claimed for it, and more. The post members are to be congratulated on providing such an event. In addition to that, the participants in the program deserve the thanks of both the Legion and the hundreds of people in attendance for an enjoyable entertainment. Their services were all given without charge, as was the theater and practically everything in connection with the affair. Perhaps it can become an annual means of celebration.

COURT TECHNICALITIES

Court technicalities have become a byword in this country, because they are so regularly invoked for the obstruction of justice. It is usually felt, however, that the correction of this evil is a tremendously difficult task.

The legal profession seems to dodge responsibility for it. Lawyers insist that they are within their rights, and moreover that if the rules were ignored, the whole system of justice would crumble. Judges protest that they are helpless. The buck is passed to legislatures.

This is all a mistake, says Judge Marcus A. Kavanagh, of Chicago, who has been on the bench for 30 years. Speaking of the way England, from which our judicial system is borrowed, has swept away this maze of entangling technicalities, he says:

"This relief can be had in the United States without the aid of any legislation whatever. The courts themselves have in themselves the power and duty to correct these absurd technicalities."

They were not created by legislatures, he says. "They are all judge-made laws, and have been followed by other judges until they become precedents." These precedents are not compulsory. The courts have the power to disregard them, and in most of the states are expressly commanded by the legislatures "to disregard the errors and to affirm the judgment unless they can see that the error has caused injustice." But for the most part, this has not been done.

The innate conservatism of the bar and bench has prevented the reform. And when a judge has the courage to cut through the red tape and insist on taking a straight line to essential justice, in spite of technical errors, he is likely to be called by his legal brethren a "dangerous radical."

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NEW YEAR'S GREETINGS

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