

IN HIS STEPS.

"What Would Jesus Do?"

By CHARLES M. SHELDON.

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[CONTINUED.]

Edward Norman looked around the room, and no one spoke. He was struck for the first time in his life with the fact that in all the years of his newspaper life he had never had the force of the paper together in this way. "Would Jesus do that? That is, would he probably run a newspaper on some loving family plan where editors, reporters, pressmen and all met to discuss and devise and plan for the making of a paper that should have in view?"

He caught himself drawing almost away from the facts of typographical unions and office rules and reporters' enterprise and all the cold businesslike methods that make a great daily successful. But still the vague picture that came up in the mailing room would not fade away, even when he had gone into his office and the men had gone back to their places with wonder in their looks and questions of all sorts on their tongues as they talked over the editor's remarkable actions.

Clark came in and had a long serious talk with the chief. He was thoroughly roused, and his protest almost reached the point of resigning his place. Norman guarded himself carefully. Every minute of the interview was painful to him, but he felt more than ever the necessity of doing the Christlike thing. Clark was a very valuable man. It would be difficult to fill his place. But he was not able to give any reasons for continuing the Sunday paper that answered the question, "What would Jesus do?" by letting Jesus print that edition.

"It comes to this, then," said Clark finally. "You will bankrupt the paper in 90 days. We might as well face that future fact."

"I don't think we shall. Will you stay by the News until it is bankrupt?" asked Edward Norman, with a strange smile.

"Mr. Norman, I don't understand you. You are not the same man this week that I over knew."

"I don't know myself either. Clark. Something remarkable has come upon me and borne me on, but I was never more convinced of final success and power for the paper. You have not answered my question. Will you stay with me?"

Clark hesitated a moment and finally said "Yes." Norman shook hands with him and turned to his desk. Clark went back into his room stirred by a number of conflicting emotions. He had never before known such an exciting and mentally disturbing week, and he felt now as if he were connected with an enterprise that might at any moment collapse and ruin him and all connected with it.

Sunday morning dawned again on Raymond, and Henry Maxwell's church was again crowded. Before the service began Edward Norman attracted general attention. He sat quietly in his usual place about three seats from the pulpit. The Sunday morning issue of the News containing the statement of its discontinuance had been read by nearly every man in the house. The announcement had been expressed in such remarkable language that every reader was struck by it. No such series of distinct sensations had ever disturbed the usual business custom of Raymond. The events connected with the News were not all. People were eagerly talking about the strange things done during the week by Alexander Powers at the railroad shop and by Milton Wright in his stores on the avenue. The service progressed upon a distinct wave of excitement in the pews. Henry Maxwell faced it all with a calmness which indicated a strength and purpose more than usual. His prayers were very helpful. His sermon was not so easy to describe. How would a minister be apt to preach to his people if he came before them after an entire week of eager asking: "How would Jesus preach? What would he probably say?" It is very certain that Henry Maxwell did not preach as he had done two Sundays before. Tuesday of the past week he had stood by the grave of the dead stranger and said the words, "Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," and still he was moved by the spirit of a deeper impulse than he could measure as he thought of his people and yearned for the Christ message when he should be in his pulpit again.

Now that Sunday had come and the people were there to hear, what would the Master tell them? He agonized over his preparation for them, and yet he knew he had not been able to fit his message into his ideal of the Christ. Nevertheless no one in the First church could remember hearing such a sermon before. There was in it rebuke for sin, especially hypocrisy; there was definite rebuke of the greed of wealth and the selfishness of fashion, two things that First church never heard rebuked this way before, and there was a love of his people that gathered new force as the sermon went on. When it was finished, there were those who were saying in their hearts, "The Spirit moved that sermon." And they were right.

Then Rachel Winslow rose to sing, this time, after the sermon, by Henry Maxwell's request. Rachel's singing did not provoke applause this time. What deeper feeling carried people's hearts into a reverent silence and tenderness of thought? Rachel was beautiful, but the consciousness of her remarkable loveliness had always marred her singing with those who had the deepest spiritual feeling. It had also marred

her rendering of certain kinds of music with herself. Today this was all gone. There was no lack of power in her grand voice, but there was an actual added element of humility and purity which the audience strictly felt and bowed to.

Before the service closed Henry Maxwell asked those who had remained the week before to stay again for a few moments for consultation and any others who were willing to make the pledge taken at that time. When he was at liberty, he went into the lecture room. To his astonishment, it was almost filled. This time a large proportion of young people had come, but among them were a few business men and officers of the church.

As before, Henry Maxwell asked them to pray with him, and, as before, a distinct answer came in the presence of the Divine Spirit. There was no doubt in the minds of any one present that what they proposed to do was so clearly in line with the Divine will that a blessing rested on it in a very special manner.

They remained some time to ask questions and consult together. There was a feeling of fellowship such as they had never known in their church membership. Edward Norman's action was well understood by them all, and he answered several questions.

"What will be the probable result of your discontinuance of the Sunday paper?" asked Alexander Powers, who sat next to him.

"I don't know yet. I presume it will result in a falling off of subscriptions and advertisements. I anticipate that."

"Do you have any doubts about your action? I mean do you regret it for fear it is not what Jesus would do?" asked Henry Maxwell.

"Not in the least, but I would like to ask for my own satisfaction if any one of you here thinks Jesus would issue a Sunday morning paper?"

No one spoke for a minute. Then Jasper Chase said: "We seem to think alike on that, but I have been puzzled several times during the week to know just what he would do. It is not always an easy question to answer."

"I find that trouble," said Virginia Page. She sat by Rachel Winslow. Every one knew who Virginia Page was, wondering how she would succeed in keeping her promise.

"I think perhaps I find it specially difficult to answer the question on account of my money. Jesus never owned any property, and there is nothing in his example to guide me in the use of mine. I am studying and praying. I think I see clearly a part of what he would do, but not all. 'What would Jesus do with a million dollars?' is my question really. I confess that I am not yet able to answer it to my satisfaction."

"I could tell you what to do with a part of it," said Rachel, turning her face toward Virginia.

"That does not trouble me," replied Virginia, with a slight smile. "What I am trying to discover is a principle of Jesus that will enable me to come the nearest possible to his action as it ought to influence the entire course of my life, so far as my wealth and its use are concerned."

"That will take time," said Henry Maxwell slowly. All the rest in the room were thinking hard of the same thing. Milton Wright told something of his experience. He was gradually working out a plan for his business relations with his employees, and it was opening up a new world to him and them. A few of the younger men told of special attempts to answer the question.

There was almost general consent over the fact that the application of the Jesus spirit and practice to everyday life was the serious thing. It required a knowledge of him and an insight into his motives that most of them did not yet possess.

When they finally adjourned after a silent prayer that marked with glowing power the Divine presence, they went away discussing earnestly their difficulties and seeking light from one another.

Rachel Winslow and Virginia Page went out together. Edward Norman and Milton Wright became so interested in their mutual conference that they walked on past Norman's home and came back together. Jasper Chase and the president of the Endeavor society stood talking earnestly in one corner of the room. Alexander Powers and Henry Maxwell remained even after all the others had gone.

"I want you to come down to the shops tomorrow and see my plan and talk to the men. Somehow I feel as if you could get nearer to them than any one else just now."

"I don't know about that, but I will come," replied Henry Maxwell, a little sadly. How was he fitted to stand before 200 or 300 workmen and give them a message? Yet in the movement of his weakness, as he asked the question, he rebuked himself for it. What would Jesus do? That was an end to the discussion.

He went down the next day and found Alexander Powers in his office. It lacked a few minutes of 12, and the superintendent said, "Come up stairs, and I'll show you what I've been trying to do."

They went through the machine shops, climbed a long flight of stairs and entered a very large empty room. It had once been used by the company for a storeroom.

"Since making that promise a week ago I have had a good many things to think of," said the superintendent, "and among them is this: Our company gives me the use of this room, and I am going to fit it up with tables and a coffee plant in the corner there where these steam pipes are. My plan is to provide a good place where the men can come up and eat their noon lunch and give them, two or three times a week, the privilege of a 15 minutes' talk on some subject that will be a real help to them in their lives."

Maxwell looked surprised and asked

if the men would come for any such purpose.

"Yes, they'll come. After all, I know the men pretty well. They are among the most intelligent workmen in the country today, but they are, as a whole, entirely removed from all church influence. I asked, 'What would Jesus do?' and, among other things, it seemed to me he would begin to act in some way to add to the lives of these men more physical and spiritual comfort. It is a very little thing, this room and what it represents, but I acted on the first impulse to do the first thing that appealed to my good sense, and I want to work out this idea. I want you to speak to the men when they come up at noon. I have asked them to come up and see the place and I'll tell them something about it."

Henry Maxwell was ashamed to say how uneasy he felt at being asked to speak a few words to a company of workmen. How could he speak without notes or to such a crowd? He was honestly in a condition of genuine fright over the prospect. He actually felt afraid of facing these men. He shrank from the ordeal of confronting such a crowd, so different from the Sunday audiences he was familiar with.

There were half a dozen long round tables and benches in the great room, and when the noon whistle sounded the men poured up stairs from the machine shop below and seating themselves at the tables, began to eat their lunch. There were perhaps 300 of them. They had read the superintendent's notice, which he had posted up in various places, and came largely out of curiosity.

They were favorably impressed. The room was large and airy, free from smoke and dust and well warmed from the steam pipes.

About 20 minutes of 1 Alexander Powers told the men what he had in mind. He spoke very simply, like one who understands thoroughly the character of his audience, and then introduced the Rev. Henry Maxwell of the First church, his pastor, who had consented to speak a few minutes.

Henry Maxwell will never forget the feelings with which for the first time he confronted that grimy faced audience of workmen. Like hundreds of other ministers, he had never spoken to any gathering except those made up of people of his own class in the sense that they were familiar in their dress and education and habits to him. This was a new world to him, and nothing but his new rule of conduct could have made possible his message and its effect. He spoke on the subject of satisfaction with life, what caused it, what its real sources were. He had the great good sense on this first appearance not to recognize the men as a class distinct from himself. He did not use the term "workmen" and did not say a word to suggest any difference between their lives and his own.

The men were pleased. A good many of them shook hands with him before going down to their work, and Henry Maxwell, telling it all to his wife when he reached home, said that never in all his life had he known the delight he then felt in having a handshake from a man of physical labor. The day marked an important one in his Christian experience, more important than he knew. It was the beginning of a fellowship between him and the working world. It was the first plank laid down to help bridge the chasm between the church and labor in Raymond.

Alexander Powers went back to his desk that afternoon much pleased with his plan and seeing much help in it for the men. He knew where he could get some good tables from an abandoned eating house at one of the stations down the road, and he saw how the coffee arrangement could be made a very attractive feature. The men had responded even better than he anticipated, and the whole thing could not help being a great benefit to them.

He took up the routine of his work with a glow of satisfaction. After all, he wanted to do as Jesus would, he said to himself.

It was nearly 4 o'clock when he opened one of the company's long envelopes which he supposed contained orders for the purchasing of stores. He ran over the first page of typewritten matter in his usual quick, businesslike manner before he saw that he was reading what was not intended for his office, but for the superintendent of the freight department.

He turned over a page mechanically, not meaning to read what was not addressed to him, but before he knew it he was in possession of evidence which conclusively proved that the company was engaged in a systematic violation of the interstate commerce laws of the United States. It was as distinct and unequivocal breaking of law as if a private citizen should enter a house and rob the inmates. The discrimination shown in rebates was in total contempt of all the statutes. Under the laws of the state it was also a distinct violation of certain provisions recently passed by the legislature to prevent railroad trusts. There was no question that he held in his hand evidence sufficient to convict the company of willful, intelligent violation of the law of the commission and the law of the state also.

He dropped the papers on his desk as if they were poison, and instantly the question flashed across his mind, "What would Jesus do?" He tried to shut the question out. He tried to reason with himself by saying it was none of his business. He had supposed in a more or less indefinite way, as did nearly all of the officers of the company, that this had been going on right along in nearly all the roads. He was not in a position, owing to his place in the shops, to prove anything direct, and he had regarded it all as a matter which did not concern him at all. The papers now before him revealed the entire affair. They had through some carelessness in the address come into his hands. What business of his was it? If he saw a man entering his neighbor's house to steal, would it not be his duty to inform the officers of

the law? Was a railroad company such a different thing? Was it under a different rule of conduct, so that it could rob the public and defy law and be undisturbed because it was such a great organization? What would Jesus do?

Then there was his family. Of course if he took any steps to inform the commission it would mean the loss of his position. His wife and daughters had always enjoyed luxury and a good place in society. If he came out against this lawlessness as a witness, it would drag him into courts, his motives would be misunderstood, and the whole thing would end in his disgrace and the loss of his position. Surely, it was none of his business. He could easily get the papers back to the freight department and no one be the wiser. Let the iniquity go on. Let the law be defied. What was it to him? He would work out his plans for bettering the conditions just about him. What more could a man do in this railroad business, where there was so much going on anyway that made it impossible to live by the Christian standard? But what would Jesus do if he knew the facts? That was the question that confronted Alexander Powers as the day wore into evening.

The lights in the office had been turned on. The whirl of the great engine and the crash of the planer in the big shop continued until 6 o'clock.

Then the whistle blew, the engines slowed down, and the men dropped their tools and ran for the blockhouse.

Alexander Powers heard the familiar click, click of the blocks as the men filed past the window of the blockhouse just outside. He said to his clerks: "I'm not going just yet. I have something extra tonight." He waited until he heard the last man deposit his block. The men behind the block case went out. The engineer and his assistants had work for half an hour, but they went out at another door.

At 7 o'clock that evening any one who had looked into the superintendent's office would have seen an unusual sight. He was kneeling down, and his face was buried in his hands as he bowed his head upon the papers on his desk.

To be continued.

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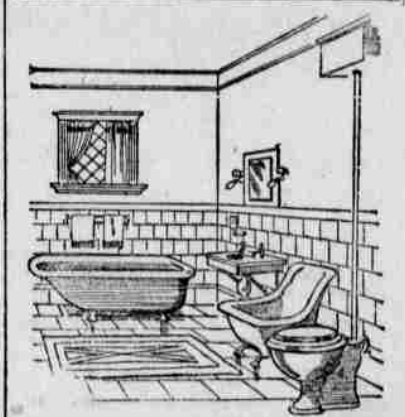


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