

IN HIS STEPS.

"What Would Jesus Do?"

By CHARLES M. SHELDON.

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[CONTINUED.]

"What was the first change you made?" asked Henry Maxwell. He felt as if his sermon could wait for him in his study. As the interview with Milton Wright continued he was not so sure but he had found material for a sermon without going back to his study.

"I think the first change I had to make was in my thought of my employees. I came down here Monday morning after that Sunday and asked myself 'What would Jesus do in his relation to these clerks, bookkeepers, the boys, draymen, salesmen? Would he try to establish some sort of personal relation to them different from that which I have sustained all these years?' soon answered the question by saying, 'Yes. Then came the question of what I would lead me to do.

"I did not see how I could answer it in my satisfaction without getting all my employees together and having a talk with them. So I sent invitations to all of them, and we had a meeting out there in the warehouse Tuesday night.

"A good many things came out of that meeting I can't tell you all. I tried to talk with the men as I imagined Jesus might. It was hard work, and I have not been in the habit of it, and I must have made mistakes. But I can hardly make you believe, Mr. Maxwell, the effect of that meeting on some of the men. Before it closed I saw more than a dozen of them with tears on their faces. I kept asking, 'What would Jesus do?' and the more I asked it the further along it pushed me into the most intimate and loving relations with the men who have worked for me all these years. Every day something new is coming up, and I am right now in the midst of a reconstructing of the entire business, so far as its motive for being conducted is concerned. I am so practically ignorant of all plans for co-operation and its application to business that I am trying to get information from every possible source. I have lately made a special study of the life of Pitts Sault, the great mill owner of Bradford, England, who afterward built that model town on the banks of the Aire. There is a good deal in his plans that will help. But I have not yet reached definite conclusions in regard to all the details. I am not enough used to Jesus' methods. But see here."

Milton eagerly reached up into one of the pigeonholes of his desk and took out a paper.

"I have sketched out what seems to me a programme such as Jesus might go by in a business like mine. I want you to tell me what you think about it."

WHAT JESUS WOULD PROBABLY DO IN MILTON WRIGHT'S PLACE AS A BUSINESS MAN

"1. He would engage in business for the purpose of glorifying God and not for the primary purpose of making money.

"2. All money that might be made he would never regard as his own, but as trust funds to be used for the good of humanity.

"3. His relations with all the persons in his employ would be the most loving and helpful. He could not help thinking of them all in the light of souls to be saved. This thought would always be greater than his thought of making money in business.

"4. He would never do a single dishonest or questionable thing or try in the remotest way to get the advantage of any one else in the same business.

"5. The principle of unselfishness and helpfulness in all the details of the business would direct its details.

"6. Upon this principle he would shape the entire plan of his relations to his employees, to the people who were his customers and to the general business world with which he was connected."

Henry Maxwell read this over slowly. It reminded him of his own attempts the day before to put into a concrete form his thought of Jesus' probable action. He was very thoughtful as he looked up and met Milton Wright's eager gaze.

"Do you believe you can continue to make your business pay on those lines?"

"I do. Intelligent unselfishness ought to be wiser than intelligent selfishness, don't you think? If the men who work as employees begin to feel a personal share in the profits of the business and, more than that, a personal love for themselves on the part of the firm, won't the result be more care, less waste, more diligence, more faithfulness?"

"Yes; I think so. A good many other business men don't do they? I mean as a general thing. How about your relations to the selfish world that is not trying to make money on Christian principles?"

"That complicates my action, of course."

"Does your plan contemplate what is coming to be known as co-operation?"

"Yes, as far as I have gone, it does. As I told you, I am studying out my details carefully. I am absolutely convinced that Jesus in my place would be absolutely unselfish. He would love all these men in his employ. He would consider the main purpose of all the business to be a mutual helpfulness and

would conduct it all so that God's kingdom would be evidently the first object sought. On those general principles, as I say, I am working. I must have time to complete the detail."

When Henry Maxwell finally left Milton Wright, he was profoundly impressed with the revolution that was being wrought already in the business. As he passed out of the store he caught something of the new spirit of the place. There was no mistaking the fact that Milton Wright's new relations to his employees were beginning even so soon, after less than two weeks, to transform the entire business. This was apparent in the conduct and faces of the clerks.

"If Milton Wright keeps on, he will be one of the most influential preachers in Raymond," said Henry Maxwell to himself when he reached his study. The question rose as to his continuance in this course when he began to lose money by it, as was possible. Henry Maxwell prayed that the Holy Spirit, who had shown himself with growing power in the company of the First church disciples, might abide long with them all, and with that prayer on his lips and in his heart he began the preparation of a sermon in which he was going to present to his people on Sunday the subject of the saloon in Raymond, as he now believed Jesus would do. He had never preached against the saloon in this way before. He knew that the things he should say would lead to serious results. Nevertheless he went on with his work, and every sentence he wrote or shaped was preceded with the question, "Would Jesus say that?" Once in the course of his study he went down on his knees. No one except himself could know what that meant to him. When had he done that in the preparation of sermons before the change that had come into his thought of discipleship? As he viewed his ministry now he did not dare to preach without praying for wisdom. He no longer thought of his dramatic delivery and its effect on his audience. The great question with him now was, "What would Jesus do?"

Saturday night at the Rectangle witnessed some of the most remarkable scenes that Mr. Gray and his wife had ever known. The meetings had intensified with each night of Rachel's singing. A stranger passing through the Rectangle in the daytime might have heard a good deal about the meetings in one way and another. It cannot be said that up to that Saturday night there was any appreciable lack of oaths and impropriety and heavy drinking. The Rectangle would not have acknowledged that it was growing any better or that even the singing had softened its conversation or its outward manner. It had too much local pride in being "tough." But, in spite of itself, there was a yielding to a power it had never measured and did not know well enough to resist beforehand.

Gray had recovered his voice, so that Saturday he was able to speak. The fact that he was obliged to use his voice carefully made it necessary for the people to be very quiet if they wanted to hear. Gradually they had come to understand that this man was talking these many weeks and using his time and strength to give them a knowledge of a Saviour, all out of a perfectly unselfish love for them. Tonight the great crowd was as quiet as Henry Maxwell's decorous audience ever was. The fringe around the tent was deeper, and the saloons were practically empty. The Holy Spirit had come at last, and Gray knew that one of the great prayers of his life was going to be answered.

And Rachel—her singing was the best, most wonderful Virginia or Jasper Chase had ever known. They had come together again tonight with Dr. West, who had spent all his spare time that week in the Rectangle with some charity cases. Virginia was at the organ, Jasper sat on a front seat looking up at Rachel, and the Rectangle swayed as one man toward the platform as she sang:

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that thy blood was shed for me,
And that thou bidst me come to thee—
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!"

Gray said hardly a word. He stretched out his hand with a gesture of invitation, and down the two aisles of the tent broken, sinful creatures, men and women, stumbled toward the platform. One woman out of the street was near the organ.

Virginia caught the look of her face, and for the first time in the life of the rich girl the thought of what Jesus was to a sinful woman came with a suddenness and power that were like nothing but a new birth. Virginia left the organ, went to her, looked into her face and caught her hands in her own. The other girl trembled, then fell on her knees, sobbing, with her head down upon the back of the bench in front of her, still clinging to Virginia. And Virginia, after a moment's hesitation, knelt down by her, and the two heads were bowed close together.

But when the people had crowded in a double row all about the platform, most of them kneeling and crying, a man in evening dress, different from the others, pushed through the seats and came and knelt down by the side of the drunken man who had disturbed the meeting when Henry Maxwell spoke. He knelt within a few feet of Rachel Winslow, who was still singing softly, and as she turned for a moment and looked in his direction she was amazed to see the face of Rollin Page! For a moment her voice faltered. Then she went on:

"Just as I am thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve,
Because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!"

The voice was as the voice of divine longing, and the Rectangle, for the time being, was swept into the harbor of redemptive grace.

CHAPTER V

If any man serve me, let him follow me.

It was nearly midnight before the service at the Rectangle closed. Gray staid up long into Sunday morning praying and talking with a little group of converts that, in the great experience of their new life, clung to the evangelist with a personal helplessness that made it as impossible for him to leave them as if they had been depending upon him to save them from physical death. Among these converts was Rollin Page.

Virginia and her uncle had gone home about 11 o'clock, and Rachel and Jasper Chase had gone with them as far as the avenue where Virginia lived. Dr. West had walked on a little way with them to his own house, and Rachel and Jasper had then gone on together to her mother's.

That was a little after 11. It was now striking midnight, and Jasper Chase sat in his room staring at the papers on his desk and going over the last half hour with painful persistence.

He had told Rachel Winslow of his love for her, and she had not given her love in return.

It would be difficult to know what was most powerful in the impulse that had moved him to speak to her tonight. He had yielded to his feelings without any special thought of results to himself because he had felt so certain that Rachel would respond to his love for her. He tried to recall now just the impression she made on him when he first spoke to her.

Never had her beauty and her strength influenced him as tonight. While she was singing he saw and heard no one else. The tent swarmed with a confused crowd of faces, and he knew he was sitting there hemmed in by a mob of people, but they had no meaning to him. He felt powerless to avoid speaking to her. He knew he should speak when they were once alone.

Now that he had spoken he felt that he had misjudged either Rachel or the opportunity. He knew, or thought he did, that she had begun to care for him. It was no secret between them that the heroine of Jasper's first novel had been his own ideal of Rachel, and the hero of the story was himself, and they had loved each other in the book, and Rachel had not objected. No one else knew. The names and characters had been drawn with a subtle skill that revealed to Rachel, when she received a copy of the book from Jasper, the fact of his love for her, and she had not been offended. That was nearly a year ago.

Tonight Jasper Chase recalled the scene between them, with every inflection and movement unrecurred from his memory. He even recalled the fact that he began to speak just at that point on the avenue where a few days before he had met Rachel walking with Rollin Page. He had wondered at the time what Rollin was saying.

To be continued.

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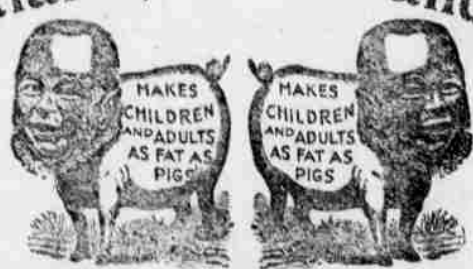
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