

IN HIS STEPS.

"What Would Jesus Do?"

By CHARLES M. SHELDON.

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[CONTINUED.]

The service was over, the great audience had gone, and Henry Maxwell again faced the company gathered in the lecture room as on the two previous Sundays. He had asked all to remain who had made the pledge of discipleship and any others who wished to be included. The after-service seemed now to be a necessity. As he went in and faced the people there his heart trembled. There were at least 200 present. The Holy Spirit was never so manifest. He missed Jasper Chase, but all the others were present. He asked Milton Wright to pray. The very air was charged with divine possibilities. What would resist such a baptism of power? How had they lived all these years without it?

They counseled together, and there were many prayers. Henry Maxwell dated from that meeting some of the serious events that afterward became a part of the history of the First church of Raymond. When finally they went home, all of them were impressed with the joy of the Spirit's power.

Donald Marsh, president of Lincoln college, walked home with Henry Maxwell.

"I have reached one conclusion, Maxwell," said Marsh, speaking slowly. "I have found my cross, and it is a heavy one, but I shall never be satisfied until I take it up and carry it."

Maxwell was silent, and the president went on:

"Your sermon today made clear to me what I have long been feeling I ought to do. What would Jesus do in my place? I have asked the question repeatedly since I made my promise. I have tried to satisfy myself that he would simply go on, as I have done, attending to the duties of my college, teaching the classes in ethics and philosophy. But I have not been able to avoid the feeling that he would do something more. That something is what I do not want to do. It will cause me genuine suffering to do it. I dread it with all my soul. You may be able to guess what it is."

"Yes, I think I know," Henry Maxwell replied. "It is my cross too. I would almost rather do anything else." Donald Marsh looked surprised, then relieved. Then he spoke sadly, but with great conviction:

"Maxwell, you and I belong to a class of professional men who have always avoided the duties of citizenship. We have lived in a little world of scholarly seclusion, doing work we have enjoyed and shrinking from the disagreeable duties that belong to the life of the citizen. I confess with shame that I have purposely avoided the responsibility that I owe to this city personally. I understand that our city officials are a corrupt, unprincipled set of men, controlled in large part by the whisky element, and thoroughly selfish, so far as the affairs of city government are concerned. Yet all these years I, with

nearly every teacher in the college, have been satisfied to let other men run the municipality and have lived in a little world of my own, out of touch and sympathy with the real world of the people. 'What would Jesus do?' I have tried even to avoid an honest answer. I can no longer do so. My plain duty is to take a personal part in this coming election, go to the primaries, throw the weight of my influence, whatever it is, toward the nomination and election of good men and plunge into the very depths of this entire horrible whirlpool of deceit, bribery, political trickery and sordidness as it exists in Raymond today. I would sooner walk up to the mouth of a cannon any time than do this. I dread it because I hate the touch of the whole matter.

"I would give almost anything to be able to say, 'I do not believe Jesus would do anything of the sort,' but I am more and more persuaded that he would. This is where the suffering comes to me. It would not hurt me half so much to lose my position or my home. I loathe the contact with this municipal problem. I would much prefer to remain quietly in my scholastic life with my classes in ethics and philosophy, but the call has come so plainly that I cannot escape. 'Donald Marsh, follow me. Do your duty as a citizen of Raymond at the point where your citizenship will cost you something. Help to cleanse this great municipal stables, even if you do have to soil your aristocratic feelings a little.' Maxwell, this is my cross. I must take it up or deny my Lord."

"You have spoken for me also," replied Maxwell, with a sad smile. "Why should I, simply because I am a clergyman, shelter myself behind my refined, sensitive feelings and, like a coward, refuse to touch, except in a sermon possibly, the duty of citizenship? I am unused to the ways of the political life of the city. I have never taken an active part in any nomination of good men. There are hundreds of ministers like me. As a class we do not practice in the municipal life the duties and privileges we preach from the pulpit. What would Jesus do? I am now at a point where, like you, I am driven to answer the question one way. My duty is plain. I must suffer. All my parish work, all my little trials or self-sacrifices, are as nothing to me compared with the breaking into my scholarly, intellectual, self-contained habits of this open, coarse, public fight for a clean city life. I could go and live at the Rectangle rest of my days and work in the slums for a bare living, and I could enjoy it

more than the thought of plunging into a fight for the reform of this whisky ridden city. It would cost me less. But, like you, I have been unable to shake off my responsibility. The answer to the question, 'What would Jesus do?' in this case leaves me no peace, except when I say, 'Jesus would have me act the part of a Christian citizen.' Marsh, as you say, we professional men, ministers, professors, artists, literary men, scholars, have almost invariably been political cowards. We have avoided the sacred duties of citizenship either ignorantly or selfishly. Certainly Jesus in our age would not do that. We can do no less than take up this cross and follow him."

These two men walked on in silence for awhile. Finally President Marsh said:

"We do not need to act alone in this matter. With all the men who have made the promise, we certainly can have companionship and strength even of numbers. Let us organize the Christian forces of Raymond for the battle against rum and corruption. We certainly ought to enter the primaries with a force that will be able to do more than utter a protest. It is a fact that the saloon element is cowardly and easily frightened, in spite of its lawlessness and corruption. Let us plan a campaign that will mean something because it is organized righteousness. Jesus would use great wisdom in this matter. He would employ means. He would make large plans. Let us do so. If we bear this cross, let us do it bravely, like men."

They talked over the matter a long time and met again the next day in Henry Maxwell's study to develop plans. The city primaries were called for Friday. Rumors of strange and unheard-of events to the average citizen were current in political circles throughout Raymond. The Crawford system of balloting for nominations was not in use in the state, and the primary was called for a public meeting at the courthouse.

The citizens of Raymond will never forget that meeting. It was so unlike any political meeting ever held in Raymond before that there was no attempt at comparison. The special officers to be nominated were mayor, city council, chief of police, city clerk and city treasurer.

The Evening News in its Saturday edition gave a full account of the primaries, and in an editorial column Edward Norman spoke with a directness and conviction that the Christian people of Raymond were learning to respect deeply because so evidently sincere and unselfish. A part of that editorial is also a part of this history:

"It is safe to say that never before in the history of Raymond was there a primary like the one in the courthouse last night. It was, first of all, a complete surprise to the city politicians, who have been in the habit of carrying on the affairs of the city as if they owned them and every one else was simply a tool or a cipher. The overwhelming surprise of the wire puller last night consisted in the fact that a large number of the citizens of Raymond who have heretofore taken no part in the city's affairs entered the primary and controlled it, nominating some of the best men for all the offices to be filled at the coming election."

"It was a tremendous lesson in good citizenship. President Marsh of Lincoln college, who never before entered a city primary and whose face even was not known to many of the ward politicians, made one of the best speeches ever heard in Raymond. It was almost ludicrous to see the faces of the men who for years have done as they pleased when President Marsh rose to speak. Many of them asked, 'Who is he?' The consternation deepened as the primary proceeded and it became evident that the old time ring of city rulers was outnumbered. Henry Maxwell, pastor of the First church; Milton Wright, Alexander Powers, Professors Brown, Wilbur and Park of Lincoln college, Rev. John West, Dr. George Maine of the Pilgrim church, Dean Ward of the Holy Trinity and scores of well known business and professional men, most of them church members, were present, and it did not take long to see that they had all come with the direct and definite purpose of nominating the best men possible. Most of these men had never been seen in a primary. They were complete strangers to the politicians, but they had evidently profited by the politician's methods and were able to organize and united effort to nominate the entire ticket."

"As soon as it became plain that the primary was out of their control the regular ring withdrew in disgust and nominated another ticket. The News simply calls the attention of all decent citizens to the fact that this last ticket contains the names of whisky men, and the line is distinctly and sharply drawn between the machine and corrupt city government, such as we have heretofore, and a clean, honest, capable, businesslike city administration, such as every good citizen ought to want. It is not necessary to remind the people of Raymond that the question of local option comes up at the election. That will be the most important question on the ticket. The crisis of our city affairs has been reached. The issue is squarely before us. Shall we continue the rule of rum and bootie and shameless incompetency, or shall we, as President Marsh said in his noble speech, rise as good citizens and begin a new order of things, cleansing our city of the worst enemy known to municipal honesty and doing what lies in our power to do with the ballot—to purify our civic life?"

"The News is positively and without reservation on the side of the new movement. We shall henceforth do all in our power to drive out the saloon and destroy its political strength. We shall advocate the election of men nominated by the majority of citizens met in the first primary, and we call upon all Christians, church members and lovers of right, purity, temperance and

home to stand by President Marsh and the rest of the citizens who have thus begun a long needed reform in our city."

President Marsh read this editorial and thanked God for Edward Norman. At the same time he understood well enough that every other paper in Raymond was on the other side. He did not misunderstand the importance and seriousness of the fight which was only just begun. It was no secret that The News had lost enormously since it had been governed by the standard of "What would Jesus do?" The question now was, "Would the Christian people of Raymond stand by it?" Would they make it possible for Norman to conduct a daily Christian paper, or would their desire for what is called "news," in the way of crime, scandal, political partisanship of the regular sort and a dislike to champion so remarkable a reform in journalism, influence them to drop the paper and refuse to give it their financial support? That was, in fact, the question Edward Norman was asking even while he wrote the Saturday editorial. He knew well enough that his action expressed in that editorial would cost him very dearly from the hands of many business men of Raymond, and still as he drove his pen over the paper he asked another question, "What would Jesus do?" That question had become a part of his life now. It was greater than any other.

But for the first time in his history Raymond had seen the professional men, the teachers, the college professors, the doctors, the ministers, take political action and put themselves definitely and sharply in antagonism to the evil forces that had so long controlled the machine of the municipal government. The fact itself was astonishing. President Marsh acknowledged to himself, with a feeling of humiliation, that never before had he known what civic righteousness could accomplish. From that Friday night's work he dated for himself and his college a new definition of the worn phrase, "the scholar in politics." Education for him and those who were under his influence ever after meant some element of suffering. Sacrifice must now enter into the factor of development.

At the Rectangle that week the tide of spiritual life rose high and as yet showed no signs of flowing back. Rachel and Virginia went every night. Virginia was rapidly reaching a conclusion with respect to a large part of her money. She had talked it over with Rachel, and they had been able to agree that if Jesus had a vast amount of money at his disposal he might do with some of it as Virginia planned. At any rate, they felt that whatever Jesus might do in such a case would have as large an element of variety in it as the difference in persons and circumstances. There could be no fixed Christian way of using money. The rule that regulated its use was unselfish utility.

But meanwhile the glory of the Spirit's power possessed all their best thought. Night after night that week witnessed miracles as great as walking on the sea or feeding the multitude with a few loaves and fishes, for what greater miracle than a regenerated humanity? The transformation of these coarse, brutal, selfish lives into praying, rapturous lovers of Jesus struck Rachel and Virginia every time with the feelings that people may have had when they saw Lazarus walk out of the tomb. It was an experience full of profound excitement to them.

Rollin Page came to all the meetings. There was no doubt of the change that had come over him. He was wonderfully quiet. It seemed as if he were thinking all the time. Certainly he was not the same person. He talked more with Gray than with any one else. He did not avoid Rachel, but he seemed to shrink from any appearance of seeming to wish to renew the old acquaintance with her. Rachel found it even difficult to express to him her pleasure at the new life he had begun to know. He seemed to be waiting to adjust himself to his previous relations before this new life began. He had not forgotten those relations, but he was not yet able to fit his consciousness into new ones.

The end of the week found the Rectangle struggling hard between two mighty opposing forces. The Holy Spirit was battling with all his supernatural strength against the saloon devil which had so long held a jealous grasp on its slaves. If the Christian people of Raymond once could realize what the contest meant to the souls newly awakened to a new life, it did not seem possible that the election could result in the old system of license, but that remained yet to be seen. The horror of the daily surroundings of many of the converts was slowly burning its way into the knowledge of Virginia and Rachel, and every night as they went up town to their luxurious homes they carried heavier hearts.

"A good many of those poor creatures will go back again," Gray would say with a sadness too deep for tears. "The environment does have a good deal to do with the character. It does not stand to reason that these people can always resist the sight and smell of the devilish drink all about them. O Lord, how long shall Christian people continue to support by their silence and their ballots the greatest form of slavery now known in America?"

To be continued.

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