

IN HIS STEPS.

"What Would Jesus Do?"

By CHARLES M. SHELDON.

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Over the church in the silence that followed this strange scene, sobs and the noise of weeping arose. When had the First church yielded to such a baptism of tears? What had become of its regular, precise, cold, conventional order of service, undisturbed by any vulgar emotion and unmoved by any foolish excitement? But the people had lately had their deepest convictions touched. They had been living so long on their surface feelings that they had almost forgotten the deeper wells of life. Now that they had broken to the surface the people were convinced of the meaning of their discipleship.

Henry Maxwell did not ask this morning for volunteers to join those who had already pledged to do as Jesus would, but when the congregation had finally gone and he had entered the lecture room it needed but a glance to show him that the original company of followers had been largely increased. The meeting was tender. It glowed with the Spirit's presence; it was alive with strong and lasting resolve to begin a war on the whiskey power of Raymond that would break its reign. Since the first Sunday when the first company of volunteers had pledged themselves to do as Jesus would do the different meetings had been characterized by distinct impulses or impressions. Today the entire force of the gathering seemed to be directed to this one large purpose. It was a meeting full of broken prayers, of contrition, confession, of strong yearning for a new and better city life, and all through it ran the one general cry for deliverance from the saloon and its awful curse.

But if the First church was deeply stirred by the events of the week gone the Rectangle also felt moved strongly in its own way. The death of Loren was not in itself so remarkable a fact. It was her recent acquaintance with the people from the city that lifted her into special prominence and surrounded her death with more than ordinary importance. Every one in the Rectangle knew that Loren was at this moment lying in the Page mansion upon the avenue. Enraptured reports of the magnificence of the funeral had already furnished material for eager gossip. The Rectangle was excited to know the details of the funeral. Would it be public? What did Miss Page intend to do? The Rectangle had never before gazed even in this distant personal manner with the aristocratic on the boulevard. The opportunities for doing so were not frequent. Gray and his wife were besieged by inquiries as to what Loren's friends and acquaintances were expected to do in paying their last respects to her, for her acquaintances were large, and many of the recent converts were among her friends.

So that is how it happened Monday afternoon at the tent that the funeral service of Loren was held before an immense audience that choked the tent and overflowed beyond all previous bounds. Gray had gone to Virginia, and after talking it over with her and Henry Maxwell the arrangements had been made.

"I am and always have been opposed to large public funerals," said Gray, whose complete, wholesome simplicity of character was one of its great sources of strength. "The cry of the poor creature who kneels Loren is so earnest that I do not know how to refuse their desire to see her and pay her poor body some last little honor. What do you think, Mr. Maxwell? I will be guided by your judgment in the matter. I am sure that whatever you and Miss Page think is best will be right."

"I feel as you do," replied Mr. Maxwell. "Under most circumstances I have a great distaste for what seems like display at such times, but this seems different. The people at the Rectangle will not come here to a service. I think the most Christian thing will be to let them have the service at the tent. Do you think so, Virginia?"

"Yes," said Virginia sadly. "Poor soul! I do not know but that some time I shall know she gave her life for mine. We certainly cannot and will not use the occasion for vulgar display. Let her friends be allowed the gratification of their wishes. I see no harm in it."

"In the first place, a most exquisite anthem was sung by a trained choir. It struck me, of course, being a stranger to the place, with considerable astonishment to hear voices like those one naturally expects to hear only in great churches or concerts at such a meeting as this, but the most remarkable part of the music was a solo sung by a strikingly beautiful young woman, a Miss Winslow, who, if I remember rightly, is the young singer who was sought for by Crandel, the manager of National Opera, and who for some reason refused to accept his offer to go on the stage. She had a most wonderful manner in singing, and every body was weeping before she had sung a dozen words. That, of course, is not so strange an effect to be produced at a funeral service, but the voice itself was one of ten thousand. I understand Miss Winslow sings in the First church and could probably command almost any salary as a public singer. She will probably be heard from soon. Such a voice could win its way anywhere.

"The service, aside from the singing, was peculiar. The evangelist, a man of apparently very simple, unassuming style, spoke a few words, and he was followed by a fine looking man, the Rev. Henry Maxwell, pastor of the First church of Raymond. Mr. Maxwell spoke of the fact that the dead woman had been fully prepared to go, but he spoke in a peculiarly sensitive manner of the effect of the liquor business on the lives of men and women like this one. Raymond, of course, being a railroad town and the center of the great packing interests for this region, is full of saloons. I caught from the minister's remarks that he had only recently changed his views in regard to license. He certainly made a very striking and yet it was in no sense an inappropriate address for a funeral.

"Then followed what was perhaps the queer part of this strange service. The women in the tent, at least a large part of them, up near the coffin, began to sing in a soft, tearful way. 'I was a wandering sheep.'"

"Then, while the singing was going on, one row of women stood up and walked slowly past the casket, and as they went by each one placed a flower of some kind on it. Then they sat down, and another row filed past, leaving their flowers. All the time the singing continued softly, like rain on a tent cover when the wind is gentle. It was one of the simplest and at the same time one of the most impressive sights I ever witnessed. The sides of the tent were up, and hundreds of people who could not get in stood outside, all as still as death, with wonderful sadness and solemnity for such rough looking people. There must have been a hundred of these women, and I was told many of them had been converted at the meetings just recently. I cannot describe the effect of that singing. Not a man sang a note, all women's voices, and so soft and yet so distinct that the effect was startling.

"The service closed with another solo by Miss Winslow, who sang 'There were ninety and nine,' and then the evangelist asked them all to bow their heads while he prayed. I was obliged, in order to catch my train, to leave during the prayer, and the last view I caught of the scene as the train went by the shops was a sight of the great crowd pouring out of the tent and forming in open ranks while the coffin was borne out by six of the women. It is a long time since I have seen such a picture in this unpoetical republic."

If Loren's funeral impressed a passing stranger like this, it is not difficult to imagine the profound feelings of those who had been so intimately connected with her life and death. Nothing had ever entered the Rectangle that had moved it so deeply as Loren's body in that coffin, and the Holy Spirit seemed to bless with special power the use of this senseless clay, for that night at the meeting he swept more than a score of lost souls, mostly women, into the fold of the Good Shepherd.

It should be said here that Henry Maxwell's statement concerning the opening of the saloon from whose window Loren had been killed proved nearly exactly true. It was formally closed Monday and Tuesday while the authorities arrested the proprietor, charged with the murder, but nothing could be proved against any one, and before Saturday of that week the saloon was running as regularly as ever. No one on the earth was ever punished by earthly courts for the murder of Loren.

No one in all Raymond, including the Rectangle, felt Loren's death more keenly than Virginia. It came like a distinct personal loss to her. That short week while Loren had been in her home had opened Virginia's heart to a new life. She was talking it over with Rachel the day after the funeral. They were sitting in the hall of the Page mansion.

"About my other plan, Rachel, I want you to work with me. Rollin and I are going to buy up a large part of the property in the Rectangle. The field where the tent now is has been in litigation for years. We mean to secure the entire tract as soon as the courts have settled the title. For some time I have been making a special study of the various forms of college settlements and resident methods of Christian work and institutional church work in the heart of great city slums. I do not know that I have yet been able to tell just what is the wisest and most effective kind of work that can be done in Raymond, but I do know this much—my money (I mean God's, which he wants me to use) can build wholesome lodging houses, refuges for poor women, asylums for shopgirls, safety for many and many a lost girl like Loren. And I do not want to be simply a dispenser of this money. God help me! I do want to put myself into the problem. But do you know, Rachel, I have a feeling all the time that all that limitless money and limitless personal sacrifice can possibly do will not really lessen very much the awful conditions at the Rectangle as long as the saloon is legally established there. I think that is true of any Christian work now being carried on in any great city. The saloon furnishes material to be saved faster than the settlement or residence or rescue mission work can save it."

Virginia suddenly rose and paced the hall. Rachel answered sadly and yet with a note of hope in her voice:

"It is true, but oh, Virginia, what a wonderful amount of happiness and power can come out of this money! And the saloon cannot always remain here. The time must come when the Christian force in the city will triumph."

Virginia paused near Rachel, and her pale, earnest face lighted up.

"I believe that too. The number of those who have promised to do as Jesus would is increasing. If we once have, say, 500 such disciples in Raymond, the saloon is doomed. But now, dear, I want you to look at your part in this plan for capturing and saving the Rectangle. Your voice is a power. I have had many ideas lately. Here is one of them. You could organize among the girls a musical institute. Give them the benefit of your training. There are some splendid voices in the rough there. Did any one ever hear such singing as that yesterday by those women? Rachel, what a beautiful opportunity! You shall have the best of opportunity in the way of organs and orchestras that money can provide, and what cannot be done with music to win souls there into higher and better and purer living!"

Before Virginia had ceased speaking Rachel's face was perfectly transfigured with the thought of her life work. It flowed into her heart and mind like a flood, and the torrent of her feeling overflowed in tears that could not be restrained. It was what she had dreamed of doing herself. It represented to her something that she felt was in keeping with a right use of her own talent. "Yes," she said as she rose and put her arms about Virginia, while both girls in the excitement of their enthusiasm paced the hall—"yes, I will gladly put my life into that kind of service. I do believe that Jesus would have me use my life in this way. Virginia, what miracles can we not accomplish with humanity if we have such a lever as consecrated money to move things with!"

"Add to it consecrated personal enthusiasm like yours, and it certainly can accomplish great things," said Virginia, smiling, and then before Rachel could reply Rollin came in. He hesitated a moment and was passing out of the hall into the library when Virginia called him and asked some questions about his work.

Rollin came back and sat down, and together the three discussed their future plans. Rollin was apparently entirely free from embarrassment in Rachel's presence while Virginia was with them; only his manner with her was almost precise, if not cold. The past seemed to be entirely absorbed in his wonderful conversion. He had not forgotten it, but he seemed to be completely caught up for this present time in the purpose of this new life.

"I have never given my heart to him. I am sure. He touched my emotions, and I admired his skill as a writer. I have thought at times that I cared a good deal for him. I think perhaps if he had spoken to me at any other time than the one he chose I could easily have persuaded myself that I loved him, but not now." Rachel paused suddenly, and when she looked up at Virginia again there were tears on her face. Virginia came to her and put her arm about her tenderly.

When Rachel had left the home, Virginia sat in the hall thinking over the confidence her friend had just shown her. There was something still to be told Virginia before she left Rachel's room, but she could not find that Rachel had kept her word. She was simply conscious of more on Rachel's mind than she had revealed.

Very soon Rollin came back, and he and Virginia, arm in arm as they had lately been in the habit of doing, walked up and down the long hall.

It was easy for their talk to settle finally upon Rachel because of the place she was to occupy in the plans which were being made for the purchase of the property at the Rectangle.

"Did you ever know a girl of such really gifted powers in vocal music who was willing to give her whole life to the people as Rachel is going to do? She is going to give music lessons in the city, have private pupils to make her living and then give the people in the Rectangle the benefit of her culture and her voice."

"It is certainly a very good example of self sacrifice," replied Rollin, a little stiffly.

Virginia looked at him a little sharply.

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Richard Bird having sold his farm, he will sell at public auction at his premises, one-half mile south, and one-fourth mile east of the Ely School House, on Wednesday, Dec. 27, 1899, at ten o'clock a. m. the following described property to-wit: One span horses five years old, two cows, three calves, 35 chickens, one light double harness, one single harness, one double work harness, one covered buggy, two shot, one new wagon, wide tire, one pair bolt sleighs, one plow one sixteen springtooth drag, one donkey shovel cultivator, one steel frame five tooth cultivator, household goods, a quantity of hay and other things too numerous to mention. The terms of the sale are all sums of \$5.00 or under, cash; over that amount, one year's time at six per cent interest. Two per cent off for cash. A. Hood will have charge of the sale.