



*"In
His
Steps"*

by

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Sheldon*

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1 INTERIOR OF REVEREND BRUCE'S OFFICE

1

Man in clerical garb is sitting at a desk writing a letter.

REV. BRUCE

Writing at desk.

Dear Caxton, It is late Sunday night, but I am so intensely awake and overflowing with what I have seen and heard here in the town of Raymond that I feel driven to write you now about what has happened at the First Church.

REV. BRUCE (CONT'D)
(intensely)

You remember Henry Maxwell from seminary. He has been here in Raymond eleven years now and up to a year ago, he had gone on in the regular course of the ministry, having the largest and wealthiest church in Raymond. But a year ago today, Maxwell came into his church on Sunday morning and at the close of the service made an astounding proposition to the members of the church.

REV. BRUCE (CONT'D)
(reflectively)

But I am getting ahead of myself. You see, it really began the Sunday before...

2 INTERIOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH

2

Maxwell standing at entrance of church shakes each individual's hand as they enter.

REV. BRUCE

When the service opened at eleven o'clock that Sunday, the large church building was filled with an audience of the best dressed, most comfortable looking people of Raymond. There was Edward Norman,

Edward enters, shakes Maxwell's hand, then seats himself in a pew.

REV. BRUCE (CONT'D)

Editor of the Raymond Daily News. No man was more honored in the community. There was Alexander Power,

(CONTINUED)

Powers enters, shakes Maxwell's hand, seats himself.

REV. BRUCE (CONT'D)

Superintendent of the great railroad shops in Raymond, and Milton Wright,

Wright enters, shakes Maxwell's hand, seats himself and nods to the other gentleman in acknowledgement.

REV. BRUCE (CONT'D)

one of the great merchants of Raymond. Miss Virginia Page

Virginia enters, shakes Maxwell's hand and moves to the seats. Gentleman seated stand to acknowledge Virginia before she seats herself.

REV. BRUCE (CONT'D)

the heiress who was reported to have inherited at least a million dollars. Jasper Chase, the writer

Jasper enters with Rachael, shakes Maxwell's hand. Rachael also shakes Maxwell's hand. Jasper moves to seat himself, acknowledges others. Virginia greets Rachael.

REV. BRUCE (CONT'D)

and, not least of all, Rachael Winslow.

Rachael moves to a chair behind the pulpit. Maxwell follows her and seats himself beside Rachael.

REV. BRUCE (CONT'D)

No one had ever accused Henry Maxwell of being a dull preacher. On the contrary, he was often charged with being sensational, not in what he said so much as in his way of saying it. But the First Church people liked that. It gave their preacher and their parish a pleasant distinction. The sermon on atonement and sacrifice was full of striking sentences. Spoken with the passion of a dramatic utterance and very effective. Henry Maxwell felt very satisfied with the conditions of his pastorate: the First Church felt the same. Into the midst of this perfect accord there came a very remarkable interruption.

(CONTINUED)

RACHAEL
(sings "Jesus, I My Cross Have
Taken" then follows with
"Where He Leads Me I Will
Follow")

3 INTERIOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH

3

From the back of the room.

TRAMP

I've been wondering since I came here...

As he speaks, church audience looks
towards the tramp. Tramp walks to the
front of the church.

TRAMP (CONT'D)
(inoffensively monotone)

I've been wondering since I came here if I could say a word
at the close of the service. So if I die, as I soon may, I
can have the satisfaction of thinking that I had my say in a
place like this, and before this sort of a crowd.

Looks up and around the room depicting
the size and the grandeur of the
church.

Maxwell leans on the pulpit and looks
intently at the tramp.

TRAMP (CONT'D)

I'm not an ordinary tramp, though I don't know of any
teaching of Jesus that makes one kind of tramp less worth
saving than another. Do you?

Pauses a moment and coughs painfully.

TRAMP (CONT'D)

I lost my job ten months ago. I've traveled all over the
country trying to find something. I've been through this city
for three days trying to find a job and in all that time I've
not had a word of sympathy or comfort except from your
minister here, who said he was sorry for me and hoped I would
find a job somewhere. I'm not blaming anybody, am I? I don't
expect many of you can go out of your way to hunt up jobs for
other people like me. I'm not asking you to. But what I feel
puzzled about is, what is meant by following Jesus.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TRAMP (CONT'D)

What do you mean when you sing, "I'll go with Him, with Him all the way"? Do you mean that you are suffering and denying yourselves and trying to save lost, suffering humanity just as I understand Jesus did? Your minister said

Tramp looks at the minister and then back at the church audience.

TRAMP (CONT'D)

that it is necessary for the disciple of Jesus to follow His steps. What do you mean by it? I see the ragged edge of things a good deal. I understand there are more than five hundred men in this city in my situation, most of them have families. Somehow I get puzzled when I see so many Christians living in luxury and singing "Jesus I my cross have taken, all to leave and follow Thee" and remember how my wife died in a tenement in New York City. Of course, I don't expect you people can prevent every one from dying of starvation and tenement air, but I understand that Christian people own a good many of the tenements. A member of a church was the owner of the one where my wife died, and I have wondered if following Jesus all the way was true in his case. It seems to me there's an awful lot of trouble in the world that somehow wouldn't exist if all of the people who sing such songs went and lived them out. I suppose I don't understand. I'm not blaming anyone, am I? But what would Jesus do? It seems the people in the big churches have good clothes and nice houses and money to spend for luxuries while other people outside the churches, thousands of them, die in tenements and walk the streets for jobs and grow up in misery and drunkenness and sin. Is that what you Christians mean by following in His steps?

He gives a lurch forward. Tramp crumples onto the floor.

MAXWELL

We will consider the service closed.

Maxwell kneels by the tramp. Several of the congregation come to his aid. Rest of cast respond in various forms of surprise.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Take him to my study. I'll care for him there.

INTERIOR OF REVEREND BRUCE'S OFFICE

REV. BRUCE

Henry Maxwell cared for the tramp that week. The next Sunday he entered his pulpit to face one of the largest congregations that had ever crowded the First Church. He could see the face of the tramp as he opened his Bible. The service that morning contained a new element. No one could remember when Henry Maxwell had preached without notes. It cannot be said that his sermon that morning was striking or impressive. It was near the close of the sermon that he began to gather a certain strength that had been painfully lacking at the beginning.

Lights out on Rev. Bruce.

Lights on Maxwell standing at pulpit.
Congregation is seated in the pews.

Maxwell closes his Bible and steps to the side of the pulpit. He faces his congregation.

MAXWELL

(with feeling)

Our brother...

Pauses and clears throat.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

passed away this morning.

Pauses again and looks out over the congregation.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

His appearance and words in church last Sunday made a very powerful impression on me and has compelled me to ask, "What does following Jesus mean?". I am not in a position to condemn any of you or myself in our Christ-like relationship to this man or the numbers that he represents in the world. But much of what the man said was so vitally true, that we must face it in an attempt to answer it or else stand condemned as Christian disciples. A good deal that was said was in the nature of a challenge to Christianity as it is seen and felt in our churches.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Maxwell looks earnestly into the faces of his congregation. Taking his time, he chooses his words carefully and delivers them slowly.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

What I am going to propose now is something which should not seem unusual or impossible to execute. Yet, I am aware that it will be regarded so by a large number of this church. I want volunteers from the First Church who will pledge themselves, earnestly and honestly for an entire year, not to do anything without first asking the question, "What would Jesus do?"

Pauses while congregation murmurs.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

And...after asking that question, each one will follow Jesus, as well as he knows how, no matter what the result may be. I want all those members who are willing to join such a company to remain and we will talk over the details of the plan. Our motto will be, "What would Jesus do?. Have I made my meaning clear?

Maxwell pauses again. Congregation looks at one another.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Those of you who wish to remain, please join with me here.

Congregation rises and begins to leave.

Those who take the pledge meet by the pulpit.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

I am happy to see so many of you here. Do we all understand what we have undertaken to do?

All nod and agree

Sometime I will be able to tell you what a marvelous change has come over my life this week. The experience I have been through since last Sunday has left me so dissatisfied with my previous definition of Christian discipleship that I have been compelled to take this action. I know that I am being led by the Spirit in all this, but I did not dare begin it alone. Do we understand fully what we have undertaken?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

RACHAEL

I want to ask a question.

Everyone turns towards Rachael.

RACHAEL (CONT'D)

I am a little unsure as to the source of our knowledge concerning what Jesus would do. Who is to decide for me just what He would do in my case? It is a different time. There are many perplexing questions in our society that are not mentioned in the teachings of Jesus. How am I going to decide what He would do?

MAXWELL

There is no way that I know of, except as we study God's Word through the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus said, "Howbeit when He the Spirit of Truth is come, He shall guide you into all the truth". There is no other test that I know of.

ALEXANDER POWERS

When we do certain things, what if others say that Jesus would not do so?

MAXWELL

We can't prevent that. But we must be absolutely honest with ourselves. The standard of Christian action cannot vary in most of our acts.

PRESIDENT MARSH

And yet what one church member thinks Jesus would do, another refuses to accept as his probable course of action. What is to render our conduct uniformly Christ like? Will it be possible to reach the same conclusions always, in all cases?

MAXWELL

No...I don't know that we can expect that. But when it comes to a genuine following of Jesus' steps, I can't believe there will be any confusion, either in our own minds or in the judgment of others. We must be free from fanaticism on one hand and too much caution on the other. If Jesus' example is the example for the world to follow, it certainly must be feasible regardless of the results to ourselves.

All nod and agree.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

We will meet on a weekly basis to discuss the results of our experiences in following Jesus this way. Let us close in prayer.

All bow head to pray.

MAXWELL (CONT'D)

Lord, help us as we begin our pledge to you. Guide us and our decisions according to your example. In Jesus Name, Amen

Lights out.

5 INTERIOR OF THE NEWSPAPER OFFICE

5

Edward Norman sitting at his desk.

EDWARD NORMAN

What would Jesus do?

Bows head into hands at desk. Clark enters the office.

CLARK

Hey Chief, here's the press report of yesterday's boxing fight. It will make up three and a half columns. I suppose it all goes in?

EDWARD NORMAN

Yes.... no. Let me see it.

Looks over the report.

EDWARD NORMAN (CONT'D)

We won't run this today.

CLARK

What did you say?

EDWARD NORMAN

Leave it out. We won't use it.

CLARK

But I spent two and a half hours...

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD NORMAN
(interrupting)

I don't think, Clark, that it should be printed and that's the end of it.

Edward Norman looks directly at Clark.

CLARK
(in disbelief)

Do you mean that the paper is to go to press without a word of the prize fight in it?

EDWARD NORMAN

Yes. That is what I mean.

CLARK

But that is unheard of. All the other papers will print it. What will our subscribers say? Why it is simply....

EDWARD NORMAN

Clark, if Christ was the editor of a daily paper, do you honestly think He would print three and a half columns about a prize fight?

CLARK

No, I don't suppose He would.

EDWARD NORMAN

Well, that's my only reason for keeping this out of the news. I have decided not to do anything in connection with the paper for a whole year that I honestly believe Jesus would not do.

CLARK

What effect will that have on the newspaper?

EDWARD NORMAN

What do you think?

CLARK

I think it will simply ruin the paper. Why, it isn't feasible to run a paper nowadays on any such basis. It's too ideal. The world isn't ready for it. Besides you can't make it pay.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CLARK (CONT'D)

Just as sure as you live, if you shut out this prize fight..you will lose hundreds of subscribers. It doesn't take a prophet to see that. Surely you can't afford to disregard the wishes of the public to such an extent. It will be a great mistake if you do, in my opinion.

EDWARD NORMAN

Clark, do you think men everywhere ought to follow Jesus' example as closely as they can in their daily lives?

CLARK

Why... yes...I suppose if you base it on the grounds of what men ought to do, there is no other standard of conduct. But to succeed in the newspaper business we have got to conform to the customs and the recognized methods of society. We can't do as we would in an ideal world.

EDWARD NORMAN

So you don't think we can run the paper strictly on Christian principles and make it succeed?

CLARK

No, it can't be done. We'll go bankrupt in thirty days.

EDWARD NORMAN

We will have occasion to talk this over again, Clark. Meanwhile, I think we ought to understand each other. I have pledged myself for a year to do everything connected with the paper only after answering the question, "What would Jesus do?", as honestly as possible. I shall continue to do this in the belief that not only can we succeed, but that we can succeed better than we ever did.

CLARK

The report does not go in?

EDWARD NORMAN

It does not. There is plenty of good material to take its place.

CLARK

Are you going to say anything about the absence of the fight?

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD NORMAN

No, let the paper go to press as if there had been no such thing as a prize fight yesterday.

Lights out

6 EXTERIOR OF THE NEWSPAPER OFFICE

6

Newspaper boy enters with newspapers.

NEWSBOY

Daily News! Get Yo Daily News! Full 'count great prize fight.

Society girl enters

Newsboy tips hat.

News, Ma'am.

Society girl pays for paper, proceeds to walk away looking at the paper.

Newsboy continues down the street selling.

NEWSBOY (CONT'D)

Get your Daily News!

Society girl walks back to Newsboy.

SOCIETY GIRL

(haughty)

Here, boy! What's the matter with your paper? There is no prize fight here! What do you mean by selling old papers? My father will be extremely displeased.

NEWSBOY

Ole papers? Ole papers nuthin! Dat's todays paper. What's de madder wid you?

SOCIETY GIRL

But there is no account of the prize fight here! Look!

Society girl hands paper back to the Newsboy. Newsboy whistles and scratches his head.

(CONTINUED)

SOCIETY GIRL (CONT'D)

I will go elsewhere to buy a paper! One with the prize fight account.

NEWSBOY
(sarcastically mimics society girl)

I will go elsewhere to buy a paper! One with the prize fight account.

Looks at paper, whistles while scratching his head.

NEWSBOY (CONT'D)

Sump'n slipped a cog in the Daily Newsy.

Lights out

7 INTERIOR OF THE NEWSPAPER OFFICE

7

Clark is at Edward Norman's desk arguing with the newsboy.

NEWSBOY

What's wrong wid de paper?

CLARK

What do you mean? There's nothing wrong with these papers!

NEWSBOY

No 'count de prize fight!

CLARK

Hey, I'm just the assistant here!

NEWSBOY

Can't sell no papers!

Edward Norman enters

EDWARD NORMAN

What's the matter here, Clark.

(CONTINUED)

CLARK

This boy says he can't sell any copies of the News tonight, because the prize fight isn't in it.

EDWARD NORMAN

How many papers are there? Count them out, and I'll buy them tonight.

Newsboy and Clark count the stack out loud together.

CLARK

There's about 10 copies here.

EDWARD NORMAN

Give him his money, Clark, and if any of the other boys come in with the same complaint, buy their unsold copies. Is that fair?

CLARK

Fair! Well, I should...

Clark makes threatening gesture with fist towards the boy. Takes money from the drawer of the desk and pays the Newsboy. Newsboy exits.

CLARK (CONT'D)

How long will you keep this up?

Edward Norman walks around the office.

EDWARD NORMAN

The Newsboys should not have to lose money through the action I have taken. I have enough money and can afford to put a little brightness into their lives if I choose to do it. Good night, Clark.

Norman Edward exits positively. Clark pauses, shaking his head, ~~he~~ exits.

Lights out.

Norman is sitting at his desk.

(CONTINUED)

Clark enters.

CLARK

Hey, Chief.

EDWARD NORMAN

Yes, Clark?

CLARK

Some of your subscribers are here to see you.

Society Girl and her father rudely push past Clark.

Norman Edward stands to greet society girl and her father as they enter.

SOCIETY GIRL

Sir, we have been thinking for some time of changing our paper. We want a journal that is up to the times and progressive.

EDWARD NORMAN

I understand...

Father walks up to Edward Norman and points finger into Norman's chest. Norman backs up a bit.

SOCIETY GIRL'S FATHER
(interrupting)

What is this new sensation you have given the people of our town. Take my advice and stick to the modern methods that you have made so successful for the News.

Society girl and Father turn on heels and exit.

Edward Norman, visibly shaken, sits down.

Maxwell knocks and enters.

(CONTINUED)

MAXWELL

I wanted to let you know that no one feels the value of your carrying out your promise more than I do. I know something of what it will cost you, but not all...

EDWARD NORMAN

Thank you, Henry...

Maxwell looks at Clark and back at Edward Norman.

MAXWELL

I'd best let you get on with your work.

EDWARD NORMAN

Thank you for coming. I needed some encouragement this morning.

They shake hands. Maxwell exits. Clark hands letter to Edward Norman.

CLARK

This advertiser is canceling his ads, sir.

Edward Norman looks over the letter. Puts it down on the desk and picks up a copy of the newspaper. Thumbs through the paper.

EDWARD NORMAN

Clark, I have been looking at our advertising columns and have decided to dispense with some of the advertising material as soon as the contracts run out. I wish you would notify the advertising agent not to solicit or renew the ads that I have marked here.

Editor hands paper to Clark.

CLARK

This will mean a great loss to the News. Sir, how long do you think you can keep this sort of thing up?

(CONTINUED)

EDWARD NORMAN

Clark, do you think if Jesus was the editor and proprietor of a daily paper He would permit advertisements of whiskey and tobacco in it?

CLARK

Well...no... I don't suppose He would. But we can't do as He would. Newspapers can't be run on such a basis.

EDWARD NORMAN

Why not?

CLARK

Why not? Because they will lose more money than they make, that's all. We shall certainly bankrupt the paper with this sort of business policy.

EDWARD NORMAN

Yes, so you have said before.

Edward Norman pauses then gestures to Clark to do as he said.

EDWARD NORMAN (CONT'D)

You may direct the advertising agent to do as I have said. I believe it is what Jesus would do regardless of what the results may be to me. There are some other advertisements of a doubtful character I shall study into. Meanwhile, I feel a conviction in regard to these that cannot be silenced.

CLARK

Mr. Norman, I don't think I understand you. You are not the same man that I always knew before.

EDWARD NORMAN

I don't know myself either, Clark. Something remarkable has caught me up and borne me on. But I was never more convinced of the final success and power for the paper.

(pauses)

But you have not answered my question. Will you stay with me?

(CONTINUED)

CLARK

Yes, heaven help us, I will.

Clark shakes Edwards hand.

Lights out.

9 INTERIOR OF THE RAILROAD SUPERINTENDANTS OFFICE

9

Maxwell enters Alexanders office.
Alexander is seated at his desk.
Alexander stands to shake Maxwell's
hand

ALEXANDER POWERS

Hello, Reverend Maxwell.

MAXWELL

Hello, Alexander. How is your pledge going?

ALEXANDER POWERS

Since a week ago, I've had a good many things to think about. I'm glad you came down to the shop to see my plan and talk to the men. The company has given me the use of a room. My plan is to provide a good place where the men can come up and eat their lunch and, two or three times a week, listen to a fifteen minute talk on some subject that may be a real help to them in their lives. Somehow, I feel as if you can get nearer to them than anyone else just now.

MAXWELL

I don't know about that. Will they listen?

ALEXANDER POWERS

Yes, they'll listen. I know the men pretty well. They are among the most intelligent working men in the country. But they are, as a whole, entirely removed from church influence. I asked, "What would Jesus do?" Among other things it seemed to me He would begin to act in some way to add to the lives of these men in more physical and spiritual terms.

MAXWELL

Well, I will give it a try.

(CONTINUED)

Whistle blows. Maxwell and Alexander exit. Lights out on office and up on Rev. Bruce.

REV. BRUCE

Henry Maxwell will never forget the feeling he had this first time he stood before the audience of working men. Like hundreds of other ministers, he had never spoken to any gatherings except those made up of people of his own class. 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 satisfaction, and what its real sources were.

Lights out on Rev. Bruce

10 INTERIOR OF THE RAILROAD SUPERINTENDANTS OFFICE

10

Maxwell and Alexander reenter.

ALEXANDER POWERS

Thank you, Reverend Maxwell. The men were well pleased.

MAXWELL

It was my pleasure. I'll keep in touch with you

Maxwell and Alexander shake hands.
Maxwell exits.

Alexander sits down at desk, picks up a letter and reads silently.

ALEXANDER POWERS

(sighs)

This letter is sufficient evidence to convict the company of willful violation of the Interstate Commerce law.

Alexander drops the letter on his desk.

ALEXANDER POWERS (CONT'D)

It's really none of my business. I've known, more or less, as have most of the company officials, that this has been going on. I haven't been in a position to prove anything directly, but now...these papers change everything. What business is it of mine? But what would Jesus do? Then there is my family. If I take any steps to inform the commission I will lose my job. My wife and daughter have grown used to the luxury that my position has brought them. Surely, it is none of my business.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

ALEXANDER POWERS (CONT'D)

I could easily get these papers back to the freight office and no one would be the wiser...but what would Jesus do if He knew the facts?

Lights out.

11 INTERIOR OF THE PAGE MANSION.

11

Rachael and Virginia on couch.

RACHAEL

The fact is, I ~~feel~~ that I ~~should not~~ accept this offer to travel with the Opera Company.

VIRGINIA

What will you do then?

RACHAEL

I don't know yet, but I have decided to refuse this offer.

Rachael picks up the letter that has been lying in her lap.

RACHAEL (CONT'D)

To tell the truth, Virginia, I'm completely convinced that Jesus would never use any talent like a good voice just to make money. But now, take this opera offer. Here is a reputable company to travel with. I'm asked to go as one of the company and sing leading soprano. The salary is very good and guaranteed for the season. But I don't feel satisfied that Jesus would go. What do you think?

VIRGINIA

You must not ask me to decide for you. I believe Reverend Maxwell was right when he said each one of us must decide for ourselves, how to be Christ like. I, too, am having a hard time trying to decide what He would do.

RACHAEL

Are you?

Rachael gets up and walks to window. Virginia joins her.

VIRGINIA

Rachael, what does all this contrast in living conditions mean to you as you ask this question of what Jesus would do?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

VIRGINIA (CONT'D)

It frustrates me to think that the society in which we have been brought up, is satisfied year after year to go on dressing and eating and having a good time. We give and receive entertainments, spending our money on houses and luxuries. Occasionally, donating a little money, without personal sacrifice, only to ease our conscience. I have been educated as you have in one of the most expensive schools in America; launched into society as an heiress; supposed to be in a very enviable position. I can gratify almost any want or desire; and yet, when I honestly try to imagine Jesus living the life I have lived and am expected to live and doing for the rest of my life what thousands of other wealthy people do. I am under condemnation for being one of the most selfish useless creatures in all the world. I have not looked out of the window for weeks without a feeling of horror toward myself as I see the humanity that passes by this house. What would Jesus do with a million dollars? Our Lord never owned any property and there is nothing in His example to guide me in the use of mine. I am studying the Bible and praying.

RACHAEL

Virginia, what you have just said strikes me with great force because of the similarity of our positions. Is the best that I can do with my talent, to sell it for so much a month, go on a concert tour, dress beautifully, enjoy the applause and gain a reputation as a great singer? Is that what Jesus would do? I'm in good health, I know that I can sing well, and I know that if I go out and sing in public life that I can make a great deal of money and become well known. But is that what Jesus would do?

Madam Page and Rollin enter. All greet one another. Rollin seats them all. Madam Page rings bell for tea to be served.

Maid enters with tea service. Serves tea, then exits.

ROLLIN

I understand that you are going on the stage, Miss Winslow. We shall all be delighted, I'm sure.

RACHAEL
(slightly annoyed)

Who told you?

(CONTINUED)