

Chapter One

It was fifteen years after the First Church in Raymond had adopted the motto, "What Would Jesus Do?"

The pledge, as carried out by the members who had taken it, had revolutionized the church. Henry Maxwell still continued as the pastor. Many of the members of the church had been much disturbed by the rule which Mr. Maxwell had introduced into the lives of the members, but a majority had agreed, and he had continued to grow in the respect and affection of his large and growing congregation and in the respect of the business people and citizens of Raymond.

Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell were talking early one Friday evening about a gathering of old friends who were coming to the parsonage that night. It was the anniversary of the day when the First Church had taken the pledge to try to do as Jesus would do, and following a custom of several years, a dozen or more of the original company that had taken the pledge then were coming in after supper to talk over the old and new phases of their discipleship.

This evening Mr. Maxwell seemed strangely restless. He had gone over the list of those who were expected and had commented on different ones as his wife was asking questions. All the time he was talking, Mr. Maxwell paced back and forth between the large west window of the sitting room and the library, several times pausing to look with deepening curiosity out of the window into the waning twilight.

“Will Rollin be able to come tonight?” Mrs. Maxwell had asked.

“I’m afraid not. He has been asked to go to Chicago and consult with the Commercial Club in regard to social evils, and to take part in the eugenics congress. I think he planned to start this afternoon. But Rachel will come with Virginia.”

“Doesn’t it seem like a miracle to think of Rollin Page becoming an authority on these great social service questions?” Mrs. Maxwell said after another pause, during which Mr. Maxwell had again stopped to gaze with a look of intensity through the big west window.

“It *is* a miracle, Mary. Why should we take for granted that miracles are unnatural or uncommon? Or that they belong to any special age of the world? Why should we not expect miracles in our time? We need them. And Rollin is such a miracle. Nothing but a miraculous influence changed Rollin Page from a careless, selfish, worldly club man into a devout, earnest lover of men, a new man all over, no more like the old Rollin than white compares to black.”

“Of course, if a change in a life like that is really a miracle, we have plenty of evidence that miracles still occur. But we don’t generally call that a miracle, do we?”

“But what else can we call it? And did not the Master himself say that his disciples would do even greater works than he himself did? And do you know, Mary, I find myself of late longing, with a feeling I cannot explain, for a superhuman vision, for a real manifestation of the divine presence that somehow I cannot avoid feeling will be given to Christian disciples of this age. I long for a real, actual, flesh-and-blood glimpse of Jesus. I feel at times as if I *must* see him face-to-face. He said to his disciples, ‘I am with you always, to the very end of the age.’ If he is really spiritually in the world, why may we not see him, really see him sometime? My heart cries out for him. Not necessarily to strengthen my faith, but to give him in person some expression of my love for him. And of late I keep wondering what Jesus would do and say in the world where we live. It is so different from the world in which he lived. I would give anything if I could see him and hear him and ask him questions. And I have wondered so often of late”—Henry Maxwell paused and looked over at his wife with deep thoughtfulness—“if it might be possible somehow for him to live on this earth again. It has been so long since he was here. And the world needs him to return again. It has fought and sinned and suffered and loved and endured all through these centuries, doing wondrous things in his name and for his sake. Ordinary men in one age of the world saw and felt and heard Jesus. Why should it not be possible for men of another age to have the same glory shine around them? Why should not God give his son to the world again and refresh its courage and strengthen its faith by a glimpse of him who once came so long ago?”

Mrs. Maxwell was startled by the deep and passionate outburst of her husband. During all the years of their married life and during his entire ministry, she had never heard anything

like this. He had moved along the track of discipleship apparently satisfied with his devotion to the Master whose example he was trying to imitate. And his wife had not suspected this deep need to see him now, in person.

She rose and came over to him. He had paused again in front of the big window, and together husband and wife stood there, Mrs. Maxwell's hand on his arm, with an anxious, troubled look on her face, wondering at these thoughts that seemed to be troubling her husband. But before she could speak, he had started forward and pointed eagerly out towards the farthest distance.

"There! It is out there again! That strange light! See, Mary? How it fills the sky! It cannot be twilight, for it is too late. And we have seen it now for more than a month. What is it?"

Mrs. Maxwell could feel her husband tremble. She was more disturbed at the sight of his unusual agitation than she allowed him to notice, and she answered quietly.

"We have spoken of it before, and you remember we agreed it might easily be caused by a number of things. You remember the peculiar light that flooded the sky several years ago when volcanic dust wafted around the world from the earthquake disturbances in the Pacific islands?"

"But there is something about this sighting wholly unlike all that. It is not an earthly light. It has a color and a radiance and a movement all its own. We have never in all our lives seen anything like it."

"You are overly excited about it," said Mrs. Maxwell, again placing her hand soothingly on her husband's arm. "It cannot be anything but a natural light caused by some cosmic disturbance that we do not understand." But even as she spoke, she could not

resist an exclamation of wonder as she continued to gaze with her husband out through the window.

The softest suffusion of pale blue swept up from the horizon and was met by what seemed an answering wave of deep crimson. And as the two waves mingled, the colors were softly blended into a shade of pure white that could not be compared for one moment with the sun or moon or star light. It pulsed like a wave backward and forward, and filled not only the entire expanse of sky, but seemed as well to fill up all open spaces of the firmament. It fell over the earth like an immeasurable billow of radiance, the glittering spray thrown up against the stars, and then it subsided with a majestic slowness that spoke of all the world's accumulated forces somewhere lying latent and unspent, ready at any future time to repeat its glory for the pleasure of those who had the spirit to understand it.

Henry Maxwell turned to his wife as the light softly disappeared.

"Mary, do you mean to tell me that such a light as that is caused by volcanic dust? Or an earthquake disturbance? It is the very glory of heaven. It could be the harbinger of his coming to earth again!" He was so excited and agitated that Mrs. Maxwell felt alarmed as she looked at him.

"It is not possible, Henry. You have allowed your imagination and your longing to get the better of your usual sound judgment. It is not like you to talk and act like this."

Mrs. Maxwell drew down the shade of the window and Mr. Maxwell made a strong effort to regain his usual calm manner as he walked back into the library and sat down.

"I suspect you are right," he said with a sigh. "But it is a very unusual sight and I cannot account for it. I wonder why the papers have not had more to say about it."

"Mr. Norman mentioned it in the *News* yesterday."

"True. He did. But the *Gazette* has not had a line on it. Do you suppose—no, it is all improbable. But we will ask Virginia and Rachel when they come. And Felicia. She and Stephen will be here. They are visiting Rachel this week. It will be good to see them. And Alexander Powers and Dr. West. They must have seen the light. And the Bishop. How I wish the Bishop were alive. I am sure he would have seen it. I told them all to come early, Mary. And there is someone now."

Answering a ring at the door, Mr. Maxwell went himself and ushered in Virginia, Rachel, and Felicia. The moment they came in, Mr. Maxwell noted the look of deep excitement on their faces.

Rachel was the first to speak. "Have you seen it, Mr. Maxwell?"

"What?"

"The light!"

"The same that has been in the sky several times lately?"

"But it was more wonderful tonight than ever before. We all noticed it on our way here."

"All of you?"

"Yes. We all saw it"

"Where is Stephen?"

"He is coming. He stopped to see Dr. West about the typhoid vaccinations at the Rectangle."

"What do you think of the light?" Mr. Maxwell spoke to both Rachel and Virginia.

The friends looked at each other very seriously, and Virginia said, "We have never seen anything like it in all our lives. There is

something so unusual about it that we feel afraid. It seemed to us as if we were being enveloped in fire.”

“Yes!” Rachel broke in eagerly but with a low voice. “But did you notice, Virginia, that the people we passed did not seem to notice what seemed so strange to us?”

“How was that?” Mr. Maxwell said.

“Why, it seemed to us, to Virginia and me, as if we were enveloped in a most astonishing glory of light that would be felt by everyone, but we passed very many persons who did not seem to notice anything unusual.”

“Only,” Virginia broke in eagerly, “don’t you remember, Rachel, once in a while someone would stop and exclaim, and point up into the sky?”

“Yes, I remember that.”

“Do you know who they were? I mean the persons who noticed the light?” Mr. Maxwell asked, still leaning forward.

“No, we couldn’t see them, could we, Rachel?”

“I thought I heard Martha’s voice,” replied Rachel.

“Our Martha?” Mrs. Maxwell asked. “Probably it was. She just started a little while ago to the Rectangle church service. You know they have their meeting tonight instead of Thursday, and Martha is very faithful since she joined it.”

“It *was* Martha, I am sure,” said Virginia. “We passed her at the corner of Main and Third, and I remember I was going to stop and speak to her. Mrs. Maxwell, doesn’t it seem like a miracle to think of Loreen’s sister coming to us as she did, only one year after Loreen’s death? And to think of Mr. Maxwell baptizing her on the day the Rectangle Church was dedicated. Every time I look at Martha, I see Loreen. Poor Loreen!”

A tear fell from Virginia Page's eyes. Virginia had changed little in fifteen years. She was still unmarried. Beautiful in face and spirit, with no decrease of her old Christian enthusiasm as the years passed, she lavished her wealth and her consecrated knowledge on the welfare of the people of Raymond. She had seen the Rectangle completely transformed since that day when Loreen had been struck down in front of the saloon, where she had given her life in shielding Virginia. And through all the years that followed, Virginia had passionately devoted herself especially to the lives of women and girls in the city. Without a husband and children of her own, Virginia had nevertheless seemed to have complete understanding of the problems of the home life and needs of the women of Raymond, and she was known by them as the source of great reforms in their social and industrial conditions.

Rachel and Felicia would laughingly say that Virginia needed only a home of her own to be the most absolutely perfect woman of the world. Virginia would reply that she was fulfilled in helping to make other women have happy homes. It was the tragedy of women like Loreen that struck deepest into her heart, and when Mrs. Maxwell mentioned Martha, it brought up again the old vision of Loreen stumbling through the Rectangle that day Virginia had brought the girl to her own home and caused her grandmother to leave the house in anger.

"Imagine Martha as a member of the Rectangle Church! If Loreen could only have lived to see it. She told me while she was with me, after Grandmother went, about Martha and the fearful experiences she had gone through in the white slave traffic in Chicago. What a miracle! And what a joy to have her here with

you of all women, Mrs. Maxwell.” Virginia’s eyes filled with tears as she laid her hand on Mrs. Maxwell’s arm.

“You never saw a girl like Martha,” Mrs. Maxwell replied. “The fearful things that girl suffered in Chicago are beyond belief. She endured unspeakable things. Twice she tried to kill herself, when she could not escape from the house where she had been imprisoned. But today she is the most devoted and enthusiastic disciple of Jesus you ever saw. I think I never saw a more complete love for Christ in anyone. And when it comes to loving her church, we all feel rebuked at the sight of her absolute passion. Mr. Grey has taken full charge there, and if he stays on the way he has begun, it won’t be long before the members of the Rectangle Church will outnumber in membership its mother church. Martha herself has brought at least twenty new members into the communion since she joined. And she is the most thoughtful and helpful person about the kitchen I ever knew.”

“Yes,” said Mr. Maxwell, “all you need to do to get Mrs. Maxwell started on the ‘hired-girl problem’ is to mention Martha. We haven’t any troubles since she came into the house.”

“It’s true,” Mrs. Maxwell assented. “That girl’s Christian enthusiasm shames me every day. She headed the subscriptions at the Rectangle with twenty-five dollars. We pay her all we can afford, five dollars a week, and she dedicates one-tenth of her income to church work. And she believes in Jesus just as if he were a real person living today, as if she might possibly meet him around the corner any time.”

“And isn’t he living today?” murmured Mr. Maxwell.

“But where?” Rachel, Felicia, and Virginia looked at him in astonishment.

The bell rang and Mr. Maxwell got up as from a daydream and went to the door to admit Dr. West, Alexander Powers, and Stephen Clyde.

They spoke together. "Have you seen it?"

"The light?" Mr. Maxwell exclaimed, and his voice was echoed by the others.

"It has not been so beautiful nor so enveloping as it has this evening," said Alexander Powers.

During the past fifteen years Powers had deep experiences. From that night when the sound of Rachel's voice in the Rectangle had decided his course after the discovery of the Railway's breaking of the law in the rebate cases, Alexander Powers had passed through a furnace of trials. Not for one moment had he turned back from following his Master, but his path had been rough and broken and his cross heavy. Yet the love light of the Redeemer shone steadily out of his great patient eyes.

"You all saw it?" asked Maxwell, his old excitement rising again.

"Yes, all of us."

"It was astonishing." Dr. West spoke in a subdued voice.

Stephen Clyde had walked over to Felicia. He and Felicia had had a blissful married life. They would always be lovers. Stephen stood now by her while Felicia proudly noted her husband's handsome strength. Both had given themselves heart and soul to social service in the Master's name.

"Stephen," said Felicia gently, "what do you think of the light?"

"I don't know. There was something about it tonight that made me strangely both glad and fearful. It filled me with the deepest

longing and at the same time my heart beat with something like terror.”

“It had the same effect on me. Isn’t it strange?”

The bell rang again, and Mr. Maxwell welcomed into the room President Marsh and Mr. Norman. The moment they came into the room their faces revealed the same excitement.

Edward Norman could hardly speak. He panted as if he had been running. “Maxwell—this is a—most astounding thing—this—light. It is absolutely without parallel. How do—you—account for it? Marsh and I—tried to explain it as we came—along. It is not explainable.”

“Unless . . .” Mr. Maxwell’s face was deathly pale. His wife looked at him as she had all evening, with the same anxious, troubled look, wondering at the unusual exhibition of feeling on her husband’s part. “Norman it might be—do you regard it as entirely out of the range of human events that Jesus might live among men again?”

“Henry!” Mrs. Maxwell had come up to him as he stood in the middle of the room. The entire company was hushed into the most profound stillness. “Henry! What an impossibility! It is not—”

“But why? Why?” Mr. Maxwell persisted with a stubborn recurrence of the same thought, and yet he seemed timid about fully expressing it. “I don’t know why, if one age was permitted an actual sight of Jesus, another age might not also.”

Mrs. Maxwell gently placed her hand on his arm and, with a short laugh, made him sit down by Mr. Norman. “I think, Mr. Norman, that Henry is rather nervous and not his usual self. He has been working beyond his strength for several months.”

“I know he has, Mrs. Maxwell. It’s going to be a fine thing for him to have the assistant the church voted for at the last annual meeting. By the way, Maxwell, when does Stanton arrive?”

“Stanton? I had almost forgotten him. He might come in tonight. I told him to come right here as soon as he arrived, and he may come in soon. He wrote asking me not to trouble about meeting him at the station, as he was not certain about the exact time of his arrival.”

“I hope he will prove to be the man you need,” said Mr. Norman.

“We believe he will,” Mrs. Maxwell answered. “We used to know him when he was at the Settlement in Chicago. Mr. Maxwell feels confident no mistake has been made.”

“About Stanton?” Mr. Maxwell spoke with great enthusiasm. “Stanton is a rare fellow. He is one out of ten thousand. First Church will never regret calling him, and he will be of the greatest possible help to me. He is forty years old, mature in his judgment, and a splendid fellow in every way.”

“The only thing I have against him,” Mrs. Maxwell said, smiling, “is that he is not married.” As she said it, she happened to look toward Virginia, who was eagerly talking to Felicia and Stephen. Mrs. Maxwell seemed on the point of adding something but did not.

Mr. Maxwell simply said, “Oh well, Stanton will not cause any disturbance in that way. He is the most confirmed bachelor I ever knew who was not at the same time disagreeably stubborn about it. He is passionately in love with the ministry. That is why I am so delighted to welcome him as my helper. And I shouldn’t wonder if that was he.”

The bell had rung as Mr. Maxwell spoke, and he went hastily to open the door. The company gathered in the library could hear Mr. Maxwell's words of eager greeting, and a very strong, deep voice replying, and the next moment Maxwell ushered in Richard Stanton, his new assistant, who received a very cordial welcome from all the members of the First Church who had anticipated his coming for several weeks.

Stanton was a big, healthy-looking man, gifted with a rich voice and a kind smile, and most people took to him at first sight. He exchanged greetings as he shook hands, and when he had completed the circle around which Mr. Maxwell had led him, he found himself by Virginia.

"Miss Page, I had the great pleasure of meeting your brother at the Congress in Chicago. He made a splendid address at the opening."

Virginia was greatly pleased. "Rollin is splendid. We are so proud of him."

Mr. Stanton was silent, but he seemed to be under some deep thought, and as the others had begun to talk about various matters, he suddenly said to Virginia, "Miss Page, I had the most remarkable experience as I came up here from the station. I sent my baggage to the hotel, as Mr. Maxwell directed me to do, and I walked here. On the way, a most astonishing gleam of light shot up across the sky and seemed to open and shut like a great white blossom. I wonder if you or any others have seen anything like it tonight."

Mr. Maxwell was near enough to hear a part of what Stanton said. He turned around eagerly and exclaimed, "Can you describe it, Mr. Stanton?"

“No, I have never seen anything with which to compare it. It looked to me like a magnificent blossom, spreading out the softest white petals in a breadth and beauty I have never imagined possible. It was not like the aurora borealis, which I have seen in its glory in the north while with Missionary Landis at Hudson Bay. I was awed and at the same time strangely excited. I have never had such a feeling in all my life.”

Stanton’s voice was resonant and pleasantly penetrating, and without meaning to address any one but Virginia and Maxwell, before he had finished speaking, every other person in the room had stopped talking and turned to listen.

Mr. Maxwell leaned forward and laid a trembling hand on his new assistant’s arm. “Did you notice other people at the time and the effect of the light on them?”

“That was one of the most bewildering things about it. I was so excited by what I saw that I could not help exclaiming to a man I met, ‘Isn’t that great?’ and pointing up at it. But he looked up and replied, ‘I don’t see anything,’ and passed on.”

Virginia, Rachel, and Felicia looked at one another as Stanton continued. “Have you people seen anything like this that I do not know how to adequately describe?”

“We have *all* seen it,” replied Mr. Maxwell. And at that a silence fell over the company which no one wished to break.

Stanton looked gravely from one to another. The silence deepened. Out on the street the noises of the city could be heard, people passing on the sidewalk, the rumble of the streetcars, the passing of carriages and automobiles. It seemed to the little company in the room that something out in the great world was portending, that they stood on the threshold of stupendous movements, but all undefined and shadowy, without a hint yet of

what was to be, except as their troubled and excited hearts spoke of bewildering events which they thought had not occurred to humans for centuries.

A door opened into the dining room. Someone walked, almost ran, through the room, and Martha stood at the library opening.

No one in the group assembled there would ever forget the look on Martha's face.

She was a girl whose physical beauty had long ago been marred by the bloody fist of brutal passion. But there had come to her after her redemption something infinitely more lovely than fleshly attraction. As she stood there in the opening between the curtains that parted the alcove, the look on her face was supreme in its glory of unearthly pallor and superhuman exaltation.

She stepped into the room. Mr. Maxwell faced her, as he was nearest, and Martha said, not brokenly but clearly:

"Jesus is here!"

"Here?" Mr. Maxwell whispered.

"He is come to earth again! I have seen him!"

No one in the room stirred or spoke. Martha stood, her face glowing, her eyes fixed on Mr. Maxwell. No one knew how much time had passed when he said, with what sounded like unearthly calmness, "Where did you see him, Martha?"

"At our church—tonight."

Again a silence, deep and unmeasured. The little company took no account of time. Every eye was fixed on Martha. The girl seemed calm and at the same time her countenance spoke of profound tumult.

“Yes, Jesus is here!” she repeated in a tone so low, with an ecstasy so thrilling, that the group leaning forward in measureless excitement seemed to feel a tension break.

And the next moment, a host of questions might have poured forth, if Mr. Maxwell, his face white and a new look in his eyes, had not turned and said, “Wait! Let Martha speak. Tell us what you have seen and heard, Martha.”

Slowly, as if overwhelmed and almost stunned, but with growing eagerness, Martha began to speak. But she had not said more than a few sentences before everyone was crowding near her, asking questions, pleading for answers, bewildering her with their demands to know more.

And yet not one of them caught even the faintest glimmer of the stupendous events that were to follow Martha’s story, nor could they grasp the astounding fact, even in the faintest degree, that they were about to enter upon a succession of great experiences that would create a new sacred history for humankind, and make the heart of the world beat as it had not throbbed for two thousand years.

Chapter Two

The torrent of questions which the assembled company poured upon Martha overwhelmed her. She stood near the place where she had stopped when she entered the library and looked appealingly at Mr. Maxwell.

“I can’t answer all these questions at once,” she said slowly. “Mr. Maxwell, maybe I can’t answer some of them at all. *You* ask me, one at a time. Perhaps I can tell you something.”

The girl was trembling with intense excitement, and Mr. Maxwell, who was the calmest person in the room, noticed it and said, “Sit down, Martha. We will all be seated. If what Martha says is true—it does not seem possible, but—”

He put his hands over his face and tried to control his growing agitation. By an effort, he succeeded in calming himself and, as if by common consent, after a moment of silence which seemed all the more strange following that sudden outburst of eager questions, the company was still while Mr. Maxwell put their questions to Martha.

The girl sat now with her hands folded, her eyes looking at Mr. Maxwell with deep seriousness and a quiet assurance in her answers that caused her eager listeners greater acceptance than the noisiest assertions.

“What happened first?”

“He appeared right in the middle of our meeting and spoke to us.”

“How did he appear? What did he look like?”

“I didn’t notice him come in. He was just there.”

Martha was naturally slow in her speech. Mrs. Maxwell sometimes said it was her one fault. In reality, it was not a fault; it was simply a habit that went with her phlegmatic character. To the intensely eager listeners around her, however, she seemed to be unusually slow in answering the second question.

“I don’t believe I can tell.”

“You can’t tell how he looked? But you saw him, and you are sure he was Jesus?”

“I only know he looked”—Martha spoke with painful slowness—“he looked just like a common man, and at the same time, different.”

“What did he say?” Mr. Maxwell asked, thinking it best to come back to the other question later.

“He comforted us,” said Martha, so simply that a deep silence followed.

“But what did he say?”

“He said how glad he was to know about our church, and he praised all the good it was doing. And he mentioned the First Church, and spoke your name, Mr. Maxwell, and a lot of other names in the First Church, such as Mrs. Maxwell, and Mrs. Page,

and Mr. and Mrs. Clyde, and Miss Virginia, and the new assistant, Mr. . . .”

“Stanton,” said Mr. Maxwell as his eyes glowed.

“Yes, Mr. Stanton. He seemed to know all of you. And Mr. Norman and Mr. Powers. He said beautiful words about all of you. He didn’t blame the church for anything, just praised its great work.” There was another period of silence in the library while Martha sat looking wistfully at Mr. Maxwell.

“What else did he do? What else did he say?”

“That was about all.”

“And you can’t tell us how he looked?”

“No, sir. Not very well. I don’t think I thought of it.”

“But how do you know the person you saw was Jesus? Did he do any miracles?”

“Miracles?”

“Yes. Wonderful works. How did he try to prove he was Jesus? How do you know it?”

“After the meeting, Jesus spoke to me and told me things about my life in Chicago ten years ago. And he mentioned Loreen. He said he knew her.”

Virginia broke out with a cry as she stretched her hands toward Martha. “He mentioned Loreen?”

“He did, Miss Page. And he said she was happy where she was.”

Again that tense silence fell over the company, smitten into awed stillness by Martha’s simple but astounding statement.

“But some stranger might have found out the facts about you and Loreen. How do you know—”

“No stranger could tell me things that no one but myself ever knew, Mr. Maxwell. He told me in a few words all about

my real sinful life, things I have never told anyone, not even Mrs. Maxwell.”

“And you feel sure he, this person, was really Jesus?”

“I know it.”

“What impression did this person make on the other people at the meeting?”

“They all felt as I did. When you see him, Mr. Maxwell, you will feel just as I did. You cannot doubt. No one can doubt.”

Again a period of silence. The whole thing was so stupendous, if it was true, that their hearts and minds could not grasp it.

“Where is he, this person, now? Where did he go after the meeting?”

“He went home with Mr. Grey.”

“He is with Mr. Grey now?”

“I suppose so. Mr. Grey invited him to come with him, and they went away together.”

Edward Norman’s old reportorial instincts came to the front. “Call up Grey over the phone and ask him—”

“Yes, I’ll do that in a minute,” Mr. Maxwell said. “But I want to ask Martha a few more questions. Can you tell us, Martha, how he looked?”

“No, I don’t believe I can, Mr. Maxwell. He looked to me just like an average man, only different.”

“An average man, only different,” murmured Stanton. “Why should he look any other way? Why should we expect to see a face like those painted by stereotyped art, when we know well enough there is no authentic portrait of Jesus in existence?”

“That is what the world will expect to see,” said Virginia. “It has had a certain type of face presented by art for so long that

it will expect to see a countenance like that painted by the old masters.”

“It is all incomprehensible to me,” said Maxwell. “But what does all that mean if Jesus is here? That is the main thing, after all.” He turned again toward Martha, as if he felt there must be something else the girl had not told, something she was keeping back without meaning to conceal any real facts. “Martha, did this person say who he was? Did he call himself Jesus?”

Martha leaned forward eagerly. “Yes. He said two or three times, ‘I am Jesus! I have come to visit the earth again. I have to comfort my disciples and help build my Kingdom.’ Like that! And it all seemed so good. Oh, I cannot express it.”

Again, as so many times that evening, a deep silence settled over the little company, as they tried to measure something immeasurable.

“And did he say anything about the length of his stay, or his plans?”

“No, I don’t remember that he did.”

“Did he say anything to the people in the meeting about not making him known?”

“Not that I heard. He talked as freely and openly as anyone could.”

“What was the one thing that impressed you most about him, Martha?”

“I think it was his great joy and his air of victory.”

Mr. Maxwell turned to Mr. Norman. “Edward, I’ll call up Grey and you question Martha about anything else you have in mind that I have forgotten.” He went over to the telephone, which was in the hallway, and called up the pastor of the Rectangle Church.

Mr. Norman did not try to ask Martha any more questions, for everyone was listening to the one-sided talk over the telephone.

“Yes. I’m glad to hear your voice, Grey. We have just been talking with Martha, our girl here, you know. . . . She . . . Of course, we can’t believe it. You say . . . What . . . You really believe it . . . Asleep? Now? At your house? . . . Can you come over? Norman is here, and Rachel and Virginia, and the regular company, and Stanton has come in. . . . In about half an hour? . . . All right. We can hardly wait to see you.”

Mr. Maxwell hung up the receiver and came back into the library. The grave seriousness of his face deepened. “Grey says he has no doubt whatever. I had hardly spoken his name before he said, ‘Jesus is here!’ Actually in his own house, asleep. Can we comprehend that?”

“Of course, when he was here before,” said Stanton, whom everyone was beginning to like for his fine combination of poet and man of action, “he slept in common people’s houses, and wore common clothes and ate common food and was a practical carpenter. Why should we expect anything different now if he has come again?”

“Do you accept it as fact that he has actually come again?” Mr. Maxwell framed the question as if he were afraid Stanton would say no.

“I would be as willing to take Martha’s evidence as quickly as anyone’s. Can anyone definitively say it is impossible for Jesus to live on earth again?”

“Not impossible, but improbable,” said Stephen Clyde.

“And why is it improbable? Has it not seemed to all of us in the last ten years as if the whole world was on the very eve of tremendous happenings in the church, and in the social, business, and political life of the people? Why, it has been almost like a

spoken word of God every day. I do not find myself stunned at the thought of Jesus being here. Somehow it does not seem unnatural. It seems opportune. He is *needed* here now.”

“I have had the same feeling,” Mr. Maxwell said eagerly. “I have not been able to shut my mind to the vision of his possible coming. The need is so great. But the thought of his being here in actual person terrifies me. What will he say? What will he do? What judgment will he pass on the church and the ministry? Martha said he did not say a word of censure. It was all praise of the church. Didn’t you say so, Martha?”

“He comforted us.” Martha repeated her former statement like a child. “After he was through talking, I never felt so proud of being a church member. It seemed to me he mentioned every good thing we had ever done and told us how it gladdened his heart.”

“Didn’t he say anything about the hypocrites in the church?” Powers asked.

“He did not condemn anyone. He spoke every word in the spirit of love.”

“And you can’t tell us how he looked?” Mr. Maxwell persisted.

“No, Mr. Maxwell, I really can’t. Have you never met people you could not describe well?”

Mr. Maxwell could not help smiling at Martha’s earnestness. The company continued to ask her questions, going over the entire scene in the mission church again while waiting for Mr. Grey.

At last they heard his steps on the porch. Mr. Maxwell opened the door before he could ring the bell, and Grey came into the library. The minute he appeared, his face revealed his recent tremendous experience.

Mr. Grey had begun his career as a professional evangelist. He had been of the quiet, persuasive type, not sensational at all in his methods, and above all, a man of deep and sincere spiritual earnestness who had one purpose—to bring men to God through Christ. He had been very successful as an evangelist in work at the Rectangle, and when the mission there, started by his converts, had developed into a church, the people had clamored for him to be their pastor. He had accordingly taken charge of the church, and with the help of Mr. Maxwell and the First Church, he was rapidly shaping a strong and very useful body of disciples, most of whom had been, like Martha, among the social outcasts of the city.

One phrase may best describe Mr. Grey in his personality: he was absolutely consecrated to religious work. His one passion in life was to save souls. Mr. Maxwell often said Grey was the most unselfish and Christlike man he knew.

The first words he spoke were the same as those uttered by Martha. “Jesus is here!”

Again, that silence. Through the strange weeks that were to follow, that same awe-inspiring silence was destined to fall often over the disciples of Jesus in many places and under many different circumstances. It seemed to be a part of the entire history of his appearance. The noisy earth had been full of clamor and uproar for so many centuries. When had the people kept still and considered God? Their very definition of religion had been bustle, activity, and talking in meetings. Were these silences now to reveal that quiet approach to the Divine which is so necessary before one can then approach the real needs of men?

Grey went on in a deeply happy tone. “He appeared in our meeting tonight. The moment he rose and spoke, I knew it was

he. My heart and mind together welcomed him. It is the most wonderful thing! It is actually come to pass! Jesus is here!”

“He is with you?” Maxwell asked in a whisper.

“He is in my house, asleep.”

“Your guest?”

“My guest. In my home.”

“What does he look like?” Three voices asked the question at the same time.

“Like an average man, only . . . different.”

“There! I told you the same!” cried Martha.

“But that does not describe him,” said Mr. Maxwell.

“Why not?” It was Stanton speaking. “What are we to look for? An angel? Would he not appear as an average man, yet something more?”

Grey looked around the eager, excited group. “What Mr. Stanton says is true. When you come to see him, you will understand how impossible it will be to describe his appearance in exact terms. And yet no one of you will for a moment doubt that it is Jesus. Jesus is here! On earth again! I have seen him! He has spoken in our church! He is a living presence in the flesh among men!”

“What will all this mean?” Mr. Maxwell spoke almost inaudibly.

“It will mean everything for the church!” Grey spoke with intense earnestness. “The church is under fire. It is being criticized. It is being scorned. Did you not all read that editorial in the *Gazette* only two night ago, advising the closing of all the churches in Raymond on the grounds that they were useless and an unnecessary expense? And even our religious papers are full of articles deploring the weaknesses and shortcomings of churches

and church members, speaking of the church as a weak and inefficient organization, whereas in reality it is the most powerful and useful institution in the world today.”

“Just as Mr. Norman wrote in his reply in the *News*,” said Virginia.

“But the ministers and church members right now need to be assured of that fact. And the coming of Jesus will be the greatest impulse the church ever had to begin an entirely new and wonderful chapter of its history. If you could have heard Jesus speak to our people tonight! He declared the church to be the most useful and necessary of all institutions, and said his own disciples did not understand its might, power, and greatness.”

“Grey, do you actually believe this person is Jesus? The same Jesus whom the world crucified twenty centuries ago?”

“I am as certain of it as I am certain that I am here with you. No one can question his identity.”

“But what is your proof? What is the real proof that people are going to accept?”

“Just himself. He is his own proof. No one can deny him. Some will not see anything but a common man at first, but I believe there will be times when all the people, his own disciples and others, will be compelled to bow down to him as King of kings.”

“Do you think he will do any miracles to prove his identity?”

“No, not to prove it. But I believe he can do them if it is necessary for any purpose. The whole bearing of the man breathes power of an infinite quantity.”

“Martha says he told her things about her life that no one but herself could possibly know.”

Grey's face filled with intense interest. "Yes, he spoke to her after the meeting. It seemed to me he spoke to everyone in the room personally. And on the way home tonight, he said things to me that simply astounded me because they revealed such an intimate knowledge of my own history and attitudes."

"Do you suppose this person, whom you are so sure is Jesus, would preach for us next Sunday? What are his plans? What will he do? What is his purpose? It is all too bewildering to entertain. We do not know how to approach him."

"Approach him!" Grey exclaimed, while his eyes flashed with an indescribable exultation. "He is the most approachable person I ever met. There is not a particle of pride or aloofness about him. He is the most companionable person I ever met."

"Why not? Is that not what we expect in Jesus?" Stanton's deep voice spoke. "Would he be Jesus if he were not the most companionable person Grey or any of us ever met?"

"The whole thing is beyond belief!" Maxwell cried out. "I have been longing for this very thing for years. Now that it has come, if it has, I feel unable to comprehend it."

"Don't try to comprehend it, Mr. Maxwell. Just enjoy it," said Martha, who sometimes revealed a depth of thought that made Mr. Maxwell wonder in what school she had learned it.

"Then we can see Jesus at your house in the morning?" Maxwell turned to Grey as all the others had done.

"Yes. There is one thing he definitely said. He will visit churches and his disciples everywhere. How long he may stay in Raymond, I don't know. But that is his first purpose. He has come to comfort and encourage his own flock."

Everyone was too worked up over the great event of the evening to feel sleepy, but Grey finally went home, and Stanton

went along to his hotel. Rachel, Virginia, Dr. West, and Felicia and Stephen soon went away. Alexander Powers and Mr. Norman stayed a little longer. Norman was especially excited, as a newspaperman, over all the future possibilities of events from the standpoint of an editor and journalist.

“Maxwell,” he said, talking in his regular, steady manner, but with a deep undercurrent of excitement, “if this unparalleled event is true, it opens up a most tremendous field for change. I am especially concerned over what may occur in the newspaper world. It will be the greatest sensation of centuries. And how will the sensation-loving and sensation-providing press treat it? It is unthinkable to subject our Master to the coarse and vulgar buffoonery and irreverence of the press that considers nothing sacred and nothing private in one’s own personal life. I am simply aghast when I try to imagine what will happen.”

Henry Maxwell was very pensive. His initial excitement had given way to a profound seriousness. Finally he said, “Edward, don’t you think we can leave all that to him? Do you doubt he will know what to do under all circumstances, just as he did when he came before?”

Norman actually stared at Maxwell, then said with a sigh of relief, “I confess, I had not thought of it in that way. I was only thinking of our own newspaper vulgarity and the hasty, superficial treatment of every serious thing. I don’t know how it will all come out, but of course I don’t doubt his superior wisdom and ability to face any situation of modern life. Can you make yourself believe that such a marvelous event has really occurred—that Jesus Christ, in the flesh, is actually living and breathing in Raymond tonight?”

“I believe it without question.” Alexander Powers spoke softly, almost as if talking to himself. Throughout the evening, he had

sat silently, only occasionally uttering a word, deeply absorbed in Martha's answers, observant of all shades of expression, and tense with suppressed feelings. To anyone who was familiar with this man's history and the cross he had borne in loyalty to his Lord, it might have been revealed that night that Powers was in a state of exaltation, free from any trace of hesitation or doubt. He had accepted, with a heart that was hungry for a look at its Lord, the entire stupendous statement of Martha from the moment she had exclaimed, "Jesus is here!" From then on, his entire faith would rest calmly and joyfully on this person and call him Master and Lord.

Not so Mr. Maxwell. He confessed to Norman, Powers, Mrs. Maxwell, and Martha, as they remained in the library after the others had gone, that he could not yet bring his mind to accept such an astounding event as a real fact. In spite of his own intense desire for such an appearance, and in spite of all Martha and Mr. Grey had said, he found a region of doubt still existing in his own mind. He found himself murmuring almost mechanically, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."

"I accept it completely!" Alexander Powers's voice broke through Maxwell's reverie. "I believe he is here. I don't doubt my Lord and my God. What an unheard-of joy to see him at last!" Tears streamed down his face. His friends understood it.

When he and Norman went away, Maxwell said, "Powers, I want to believe as much as you do. And I have a feeling that I shall as soon as I meet him. I am going over to Grey's first thing in the morning. Did I tell you, the last thing Grey said to me tonight was that he—the person—had told him he wanted to see me early tomorrow?"



Mr. Maxwell did not sleep that night, and he welcomed the early light. As soon as the simple morning meal was over, he went out. Mrs. Maxwell laid her hand on his arm as he left the house, simply saying, "It will be all right, Henry. Leave it with the Father."

The town looked just the same. At that early hour, people were still going to work. Maxwell did not subscribe to the *Gazette*, which was an evening paper, but as he passed through the shop district adjoining the Rectangle, he heard a newsboy crying out something about a "great story—Rectangle church meeting—last night! Special edition!"

He refused to buy a copy thrust at him by another boy as he turned the corner onto the street where Grey lived. But when he came up to the house, he noticed a number of young men, two with cameras, standing outside, and recognized them as *Gazette* reporters. He walked up to the door and rang the bell. The reporters crowded around him.

Grey opened the door. One of the newspaper boys tried to force his way in, but Grey politely yet firmly blocked his entrance. "Come in, Mr. Maxwell. We have been waiting for you," he said quietly. He did not even reply to the general clamor of the press representatives.

As soon as Mr. Maxwell was in the hall, Grey locked the door then turned, looked at Maxwell, waited a moment, then ushered him into the sitting room. Mr. Maxwell's heart beat with tremendous excitement as he entered the room and saw the person waiting there to receive him.