

CHARLES M. SHELDON

# IN HIS STEPS



RELIGIOUS NOVEL

**Charles M. Sheldon**

# **In His Steps (Religious Novel)**

**Enriched edition.**

*Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Grant McNeil*

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# Table of Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Synopsis](#)

[Historical Context](#)

[\*\*In His Steps \(Religious Novel\)\*\*](#)

[Analysis](#)

[Reflection](#)

[Memorable Quotes](#)

[Notes](#)

# Introduction

[Table of Contents](#)

What happens when ordinary believers decide that every choice—public or private—must be measured against the demanding pattern of a life of radical compassion? In *His Steps*, a religious novel by American minister and writer Charles M. Sheldon, emerged in the United States in the 1890s and is set chiefly in the fictional town of Raymond before widening into an urban milieu. Blending narrative drive with moral inquiry, it channels concerns of Protestant social reform while retaining the immediacy of parish life. The book's central experiment unfolds within familiar civic, economic, and domestic spaces, testing how faith might operate where comfort, reputation, and livelihood are most at stake.

At the novel's outset, a crisis of conscience confronts Reverend Henry Maxwell and his congregation, prompting a small circle to undertake a disciplined experiment in applied discipleship. Sheldon follows these figures through workplaces, neighborhoods, and public institutions as they try to align attitude and action, resisting the shortcuts of habit. The plot is straightforward and episodic, designed less for surprise than for a steady accumulation of ethical weight. The voice is earnest and accessible, the tone pastoral yet probing, with scenes that stage dilemmas rather than obscure them. The reading experience is reflective, inviting moments of self-assessment between chapters.

Sheldon writes in clear, plainspoken prose suited to congregational listening and personal devotion alike, favoring short chapters that turn on recognizable moral crossroads. The narration is sympathetic but unsparing, allowing readers to feel both the pull of convenience and the quiet force of conviction. Characters are presented through their vocational lives as much as their inner conflicts, so that choices at the pulpit, the newsroom, the office, or the parlor carry social consequences. The effect is cumulative: individual decisions create ripples that challenge prevailing assumptions about success, respectability, and responsibility without relying on sensational incident or melodramatic twists.

The themes are direct and resonant. Discipleship is treated as imitation in practice rather than assent in theory, foregrounding integrity when principles threaten income, reputation, or influence. The novel probes the ethics of power—economic, cultural, and institutional—and weighs charity against justice, private generosity against structural change. It examines conscience in community, showing how shared commitments can steady individuals when the cost of fidelity rises. Through recurring vocational tests, it raises questions about stewardship, speech, and neighbor-love that extend far beyond the sanctuary, urging readers to consider how belief informs contracts, headlines, schedules, and habits of consumption.

Situated in a rapidly industrializing America with widening disparities and crowded cities, the book participates in conversations that later came to be associated with the Social Gospel. Written by a working

minister, it reflects pastoral attention to local suffering as well as public life, insisting that moral seriousness must engage systems as much as souls. Without polemicizing, Sheldon arranges his episodes so that readers glimpse the human stakes of policy, commerce, and culture. The historical atmosphere remains discernible—factory towns, bustling streets, and civic clubs—but the narration stays with faces and choices, translating broad social pressures into decisions ordinary people must make.

For contemporary readers, its abiding value lies in the practicality of its ethical invitation. The novel addresses the temptations of convenience that persist in today's workplaces, marketplaces, and media ecosystems, asking how convictions might guide budgets, schedules, platforms, and partnerships. It suggests that integrity requires both courage and companionship, and that communities can design habits that make good intentions actionable. Readers from varied traditions—or none—can approach it as a sustained thought experiment about aligning ends and means, clarifying which loyalties are ultimate and which are merely inherited, expedient, or fashionable.

Approached on its own terms, *In His Steps* is best read as a catalyst for reflection rather than as a puzzle to be solved, since its interest lies in why people choose as they do, not in unforeseen reversals. Without revealing outcomes, this introduction notes only the initial commitment that frames the story and generates its moral momentum. The chapters encourage pause, conversation, and application, inviting readers to imagine local possibilities rather than admire distant heroes. That enduring invitation—testing daily

decisions against a demanding moral exemplar—explains the book's lasting presence and offers a steadying compass for readers navigating the complexities of modern life.

# Synopsis

## [Table of Contents](#)

In *His Steps*, a religious novel by Charles M. Sheldon, uses a fictional Midwestern town, Raymond, to explore the practical demands of Christian discipleship within everyday life. The story opens when a destitute stranger appears at the church led by Reverend Henry Maxwell and questions the gulf between professed belief and lived compassion. After he collapses and is taken in, the congregation confronts its own complacency. Deeply moved, Maxwell invites volunteers to undertake a yearlong commitment: before any decision, they will pause to consider how closely their choice would mirror the pattern of Jesus's life, regardless of convenience or cost.

A diverse circle responds to the challenge, including a celebrated singer, a prominent newspaper editor, a well-placed railroad official, several business owners, and wealthy young socialites. Their pledge immediately collides with entrenched habits, professional expectations, and community opinion. The singer must weigh commercial success against service to the poor. The editor reevaluates his newsroom's priorities and revenue sources. The official confronts practices in his industry that seem routine yet ethically dubious. Friends and family question the wisdom of risking stability for principle. Sheldon structures the narrative as a sequence of personal tests, allowing readers to watch how the guiding question reframes ordinary choices.

One thread follows the newspaper's transformation, charting the cost of honest reporting and the refusal of sensationalism or exploitative advertising. Circulation dips as popular features are dropped, and revenue shrinks when certain ad categories are declined. Staff resignations and public criticism mount, yet the editor persists in aligning coverage with the welfare of readers rather than with spectacle. The paper curtails Sunday operations, emphasizes constructive reform, and gives voice to people typically overlooked. Through this institutional case, the novel probes whether Christian ethics can reshape media culture without sacrificing viability, and how truth-telling might serve a city's moral and civic health.

Another arc centers on compassion-driven outreach in Raymond's toughest district, known as the Rectangle, where saloons, dance halls, and street poverty concentrate. Pledge-takers spend time there, discovering complex lives behind familiar stereotypes and confronting the limits of charity that never questions systems. The singer's path intersects with this work, testing motives about acclaim, income, and the use of artistic gifts. Scenes of rescue efforts and public meetings reveal both sincere opposition from vice interests and uneasy ambivalence among respectable citizens. Sheldon emphasizes patient presence, shared risk, and practical aid, presenting discipleship as bodily, time-consuming solidarity rather than merely distant benevolence.

Questions of wealth and power surface as benefactors and executives consider the social consequences of their positions. Some redirect investments toward housing,

temperance initiatives, and fair labor, experimenting with philanthropy that seeks long-term repair. Others confront corruption inside corporate hierarchies, discovering how entrenched incentives normalize moral compromise. The pledge's simplicity becomes demanding as it forbids convenient half-measures, yet the characters must also discern prudence, timing, and the responsibilities they owe to employees and dependents. Conversations across classes and professions map the fault lines between expediency and conscience, showing how small, steady acts of integrity can unsettle accepted business practice.

As the experiment gains notice, the narrative broadens beyond Raymond to a larger urban congregation that adopts the same commitment. In this more complex setting, the guiding question encounters organized vice, political machines, labor unrest, and mass entertainment. Pastors, professionals, and wage earners test what principled choices look like when consequences ripple through whole neighborhoods. Some initiatives cohere into coordinated reform; others spark backlash or unintended strain. By juxtaposing personal devotion with civic structures, Sheldon explores how faith-inspired action scales, how coalitions form across denominational lines, and how public witness can both disturb and attract in a modern city.

Without resolving every dilemma, the novel steadily returns to its central inquiry, pressing readers to imagine ethical consistency in mundane and public life alike. It refrains from elaborate theological debate, focusing instead on observable conduct, mutual accountability, and the moral imagination required to translate belief into habit. The

story's enduring resonance lies in how it popularized a simple test for decision-making and situated it within journalism, philanthropy, labor, and urban mission. In His Steps thus stands as a touchstone of the Social Gospel tradition, inviting ongoing reflection on the costs, possibilities, and communal dimensions of following an examined path.

# Historical Context

## [Table of Contents](#)

Published in 1896, *In His Steps* emerged from Charles M. Sheldon's ministry at Central Congregational Church in Topeka, Kansas, where he read the story aloud in weekly installments. The novel is set in the contemporary United States and imagines ordinary institutions—churches, businesses, newspapers, and city halls—confronted by evangelical ethics. Its immediate milieu was the late Gilded Age, when Kansas's rail-linked capital sat at the crossroads of prairie populism and national markets. Sheldon, a Congregationalist pastor educated at Andover Theological Seminary, wrote in a sermonic, accessible style intended for lay readers, situating the narrative within recognizable Protestant congregational life and civic structures.

The 1890s were marked by rapid industrialization, stark inequality, and social dislocation. The Panic of 1893 triggered widespread unemployment and intensified debates about poverty and responsibility. Labor conflicts such as the Homestead Strike in 1892 and the Pullman Strike in 1894 exposed tensions between capital and workers, while urban slums dramatized the costs of growth. These conditions shaped public conversations about fair wages, monopolies, and humane business practice. Sheldon's narrative draws on such realities, presenting ethical dilemmas in commerce, employment, and neighborhood life that echoed contemporary newspaper

headlines, inviting readers to consider Christian duty in the face of market pressures and civic need.

The novel belongs to the Social Gospel era, a Protestant movement that urged Christians to apply Jesus's teachings to societal problems. Earlier voices like Washington Gladden advocated "applied Christianity," while later figures such as Walter Rauschenbusch systematized its theology. Social Gospel ministers engaged labor questions, housing reform, and public morality within a progressive, reformist ethos. They emphasized solidarity with the poor, institutional reform, and civic responsibility, often working through churches, charities, and municipal initiatives. Sheldon's story reflects this impulse by foregrounding conscience-guided choices and communal commitments, aligning personal conversion with public ethics rather than treating faith as a purely private, otherworldly concern.

Temperance and moral reform campaigns formed a prominent backdrop. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union, organized in 1874, and the Anti-Saloon League, founded in 1893, mobilized churches against alcohol's social harms. Kansas had adopted statewide prohibition in 1881, making the issue pervasive in local politics and pulpit rhetoric during Sheldon's tenure in Topeka. Moral crusades extended to gambling, prostitution, and Sabbath observance, stressing character and community health. These movements, often led by Protestant women and clergy, shaped congregational life and civic debates that the novel mirrors, raising questions about how believers should act in public and professional spheres where profit and principle collide.

Mass-circulation newspapers were transforming public life in the 1890s, with sensational “yellow” journalism competing against reform-minded reporting. Editors like Joseph Pulitzer and William Randolph Hearst pioneered techniques that could both inform and inflame. Debates over media ethics—advertising practices, accuracy, and the public interest—paralleled broader worries about corporate influence. Sheldon later dramatized these concerns in practice by editing the Topeka Daily Capital for one week in March 1900, pledging to run it as he believed Jesus would. That widely discussed experiment underscored the novel’s preoccupation with honest communication and the power of the press to elevate or degrade civic discourse.

Voluntary associations flourished in the period, offering organizational models for Christian activism. The Young People’s Society of Christian Endeavor (founded 1881) structured lay pledges for service and moral conduct. The YMCA expanded urban ministries, while settlement houses such as Jane Addams’s Hull House (opened 1889 in Chicago) pursued secular-religious partnerships in education and social welfare. Charity Organization Societies sought “scientific” relief. These networks provided language, methods, and expectations for disciplined, communal action that inform the novel’s ethos. Sheldon’s emphasis on vows, mutual accountability, and service reflects the era’s confidence that organized commitment could reform personal habits and reshape neighborhoods.

American Protestantism in the 1890s included a liberal evangelical stream that embraced social reform and optimistic postmillennial hopes that the kingdom of God

might advance through human effort. Congregational polity, with local church autonomy, encouraged experimentation in ministry, including story-based sermons. Sheldon crafted *In His Steps* originally as a serial tale for Sunday evening services, then submitted it for publication through religious presses that specialized in affordable tracts and novels. The book's didactic form and plain style match a homiletic tradition aimed at moral suasion, inviting readers to practice imitation of Christ in decisions about work, leisure, charity, and civic engagement.

*In His Steps* quickly entered American religious culture, circulating through churches, Sunday schools, and lending libraries, and the phrase "What would Jesus do?" became a recognizable ethical refrain. Its context is the dawning Progressive Era, when campaigns targeted child labor, municipal corruption, and unsafe workplaces. The novel voices the period's reformist optimism while critiquing complacency within prosperous churches and businesses. By urging believers to weigh policy, profit, and personal conduct against the example of Jesus, it reflects its age's confidence in moral example and democratic persuasion, offering a program of conscience-driven reform rather than coercion, and aligning piety with public responsibility.

# **In His Steps (Religious Novel)**

## **Main Table of Contents**

[Chapter One](#)

[Chapter Two](#)

[Chapter Three](#)

[Chapter Four](#)

[Chapter Five](#)

[Chapter Six](#)

[Chapter Seven](#)

[Chapter Eight](#)

[Chapter Nine](#)

[Chapter Ten](#)

[Chapter Eleven](#)

[Chapter Twelve](#)

[Chapter Thirteen](#)

[Chapter Fourteen](#)

[Chapter Fifteen](#)

[Chapter Sixteen](#)

[Chapter Seventeen](#)

[Chapter Eighteen](#)

[Chapter Nineteen](#)

[Chapter Twenty](#)

[Chapter Twenty-one](#)

[Chapter Twenty-two](#)

[Chapter Twenty-three](#)

[Chapter Twenty-four](#)

[Chapter Twenty-five](#)

[Chapter Twenty-six](#)

[Chapter Twenty-seven](#)

[Chapter Twenty-eight](#)

[Chapter Twenty-nine](#)

Chapter Thirty.

Chapter Thirty-one

# Chapter One

## [Table of Contents](#)

"For hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow in his steps."

It was Friday morning and the Rev. Henry Maxwell was trying to finish his Sunday morning sermon. He had been interrupted several times and was growing nervous as the morning wore away, and the sermon grew very slowly toward a satisfactory finish.

"Mary," he called to his wife, as he went upstairs after the last interruption, "if any one comes after this, I wish you would say I am very busy and cannot come down unless it is something very important."

"Yes, Henry. But I am going over to visit the kindergarten and you will have the house all to yourself."

The minister went up into his study and shut the door. In a few minutes he heard his wife go out, and then everything was quiet. He settled himself at his desk with a sigh of relief and began to write. His text was from 1 Peter 2:21<sup>[1]</sup>: "For hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example that ye should follow his steps."

He had emphasized in the first part of the sermon the Atonement as a personal sacrifice, calling attention to the fact of Jesus' suffering in various ways, in His life as well as in His death. He had then gone on to emphasize the Atonement from the side of example, giving illustrations

from the life and teachings of Jesus to show how faith in the Christ helped to save men because of the pattern or character He displayed for their imitation. He was now on the third and last point, the necessity of following Jesus in His sacrifice and example.

He had put down "Three Steps. What are they?" and was about to enumerate them in logical order when the bell rang sharply. It was one of those clock-work bells, and always went off as a clock might go if it tried to strike twelve all at once.

Henry Maxwell sat at his desk and frowned a little. He made no movement to answer the bell. Very soon it rang again; then he rose and walked over to one of his windows which commanded the view of the front door. A man was standing on the steps. He was a young man, very shabbily dressed.

"Looks like a tramp," said the minister. "I suppose I'll have to go down and—"

He did not finish his sentence but he went downstairs and opened the front door. There was a moment's pause as the two men stood facing each other, then the shabby-looking young man said:

"I'm out of a job, sir, and thought maybe you might put me in the way of getting something."

"I don't know of anything. Jobs are scarce—" replied the minister, beginning to shut the door slowly.

"I didn't know but you might perhaps be able to give me a line to the city railway or the superintendent of the shops, or something," continued the young man, shifting his faded hat from one hand to the other nervously.

"It would be of no use. You will have to excuse me. I am very busy this morning. I hope you will find something. Sorry I can't give you something to do here. But I keep only a horse and a cow and do the work myself."

The Rev. Henry Maxwell closed the door and heard the man walk down the steps. As he went up into his study he saw from his hall window that the man was going slowly down the street, still holding his hat between his hands. There was something in the figure so dejected, homeless and forsaken that the minister hesitated a moment as he stood looking at it. Then he turned to his desk and with a sigh began the writing where he had left off.

He had no more interruptions, and when his wife came in two hours later the sermon was finished, the loose leaves gathered up and neatly tied together, and laid on his Bible all ready for the Sunday morning service.

"A queer thing happened at the kindergarten this morning, Henry," said his wife while they were eating dinner. "You know I went over with Mrs. Brown to visit the school, and just after the games, while the children were at the tables, the door opened and a young man came in holding a dirty hat in both hands. He sat down near the door and never said a word; only looked at the children. He was evidently a tramp, and Miss Wren and her assistant Miss Kyle were a little frightened at first, but he sat there very quietly and after a few minutes he went out."

"Perhaps he was tired and wanted to rest somewhere. The same man called here, I think. Did you say he looked like a tramp?"

"Yes, very dusty, shabby and generally tramp-like. Not more than thirty or thirty-three years old, I should say."

"The same man," said the Rev. Henry Maxwell thoughtfully.

"Did you finish your sermon, Henry?" his wife asked after a pause.

"Yes, all done. It has been a very busy week with me. The two sermons have cost me a good deal of labor."

"They will be appreciated by a large audience, Sunday, I hope," replied his wife smiling. "What are you going to preach about in the morning?"

"Following Christ. I take up the Atonement under the head of sacrifice and example, and then show the steps needed to follow His sacrifice and example."

"I am sure it is a good sermon. I hope it won't rain Sunday. We have had so many stormy Sundays lately."

"Yes, the audiences have been quite small for some time. People will not come out to church in a storm." The Rev. Henry Maxwell sighed as he said it. He was thinking of the careful, laborious effort he had made in preparing sermons for large audiences that failed to appear.

But Sunday morning dawned on the town of Raymond one of the perfect days that sometimes come after long periods of wind and mud and rain. The air was clear and bracing, the sky was free from all threatening signs, and every one in Mr. Maxwell's parish prepared to go to church. When the service opened at eleven o'clock the large building was filled with an audience of the best-dressed, most comfortable looking people of Raymond.

The First Church of Raymond believed in having the best music that money could buy, and its quartet choir this morning was a source of great pleasure to the congregation. The anthem was inspiring. All the music was in keeping with the subject of the sermon. And the anthem was an elaborate adaptation to the most modern music of the hymn,

"Jesus, I my cross have taken,  
All to leave and follow Thee."

Just before the sermon, the soprano sang a solo, the well-known hymn,

"Where He leads me I will follow **[1q]**,  
I'll go with Him, with Him, all the way."

Rachel Winslow looked very beautiful that morning as she stood up behind the screen of carved oak which was significantly marked with the emblems of the cross and the crown. Her voice was even more beautiful than her face, and that meant a great deal. There was a general rustle of expectation over the audience as she rose. Mr. Maxwell settled himself contentedly behind the pulpit. Rachel Winslow's singing always helped him. He generally arranged for a song before the sermon. It made possible a certain inspiration of feeling that made his delivery more impressive.

People said to themselves they had never heard such singing even in the First Church. It is certain that if it had not been a church service, her solo would have been vigorously applauded. It even seemed to the minister when

she sat down that something like an attempted clapping of hands or a striking of feet on the floor swept through the church. He was startled by it. As he rose, however, and laid his sermon on the Bible, he said to himself he had been deceived. Of course it could not occur. In a few moments he was absorbed in his sermon and everything else was forgotten in the pleasure of his delivery.

No one had ever accused Henry Maxwell of being a dull preacher. On the contrary, he had often been charged with being sensational; not in what he had 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 that was agreeable.

It was also true that the pastor of the First Church loved to preach. He seldom exchanged. He was eager to be in his own pulpit when Sunday came. There was an exhilarating half hour for him as he faced a church full of people and know that he had a hearing. He was peculiarly sensitive to variations in the attendance. He never preached well before a small audience. The weather also affected him decidedly. He was at his best before just such an audience as faced him now, on just such a morning. He felt a glow of satisfaction as he went on. The church was the first in the city. It had the best choir. It had a membership composed of the leading people, representatives of the wealth, society and intelligence of Raymond. He was going abroad on a three months vacation in the summer, and the circumstances of his pastorate, his influence and his position as pastor of the First Church in the city—

It is not certain that the Rev. Henry Maxwell knew just how he could carry on that thought in connection with his sermon, but as he drew near the end of it he knew that he had at some point in his delivery had all those feelings. They had entered into the very substance of his thought; it might have been all in a few seconds of time, but he had been conscious of defining his position and his emotions as well as if he had held a soliloquy, and his delivery partook of the thrill of deep personal satisfaction.

The sermon was interesting. It was full of striking sentences. They would have commanded attention printed. Spoken with the passion of a dramatic utterance that had the good taste never to offend with a suspicion of ranting or declamation, they were very effective. If the Rev. Henry Maxwell that morning felt satisfied with the conditions of his pastorate, the First Church also had a similar feeling as it congratulated itself on the presence in the pulpit of this scholarly, refined, somewhat striking face and figure, preaching with such animation and freedom from all vulgar, noisy or disagreeable mannerism.

Suddenly, into the midst of this perfect accord and concord between preacher and audience, there came a very remarkable interruption. It would be difficult to indicate the extent of the shock which this interruption measured. It was so unexpected, so entirely contrary to any thought of any person present that it offered no room for argument or, for the time being, of resistance.

The sermon had come to a close. Mr. Maxwell had just turned the half of the big Bible over upon his manuscript

and was about to sit down as the quartet prepared to arise to sing the closing selection,

"All for Jesus, all for Jesus,  
All my being's ransomed powers..."

when the entire congregation was startled by the sound of a man's voice. It came from the rear of the church, from one of the seats under the gallery. The next moment the figure of a man came out of the shadow there and walked down the middle aisle.

Before the startled congregation fairly realized what was going on the man had reached the open space in front of the pulpit and had turned about facing the people.

"I've been wondering since I came in here"—they were the words he used under the gallery, and he repeated them—"if it would be just the thing to say a word at the close of the service. I'm not drunk and I'm not crazy, and I am perfectly harmless, but if I die, as there is every likelihood I shall in a few days, I want the satisfaction of thinking that I said my say in a place like this, and before this sort of a crowd."

Henry Maxwell had not taken his seat, and he now remained standing, leaning on his pulpit, looking down at the stranger. It was the man who had come to his house the Friday before, the same dusty, worn, shabby-looking young man. He held his faded hat in his two hands. It seemed to be a favorite gesture. He had not been shaved and his hair was rough and tangled. It is doubtful if any one like this had ever confronted the First Church within the sanctuary. It was tolerably familiar with this sort of humanity out on the

**21** 'the NEWS' is the fictional daily newspaper edited by Edward Norman in Raymond; in the chapter he has modified its content to follow Christian principles and is facing financial losses as a result.

**22** A temperance-era ballot option meaning denial of liquor licenses (a local-option prohibition on the sale of alcoholic beverages); commonly used in late 19th–early 20th century U.S. municipal elections to ban saloons in a ward or town.

**23** Line and title of a popular 19th-century gospel hymn (commonly called 'The Ninety and Nine') based on the Parable of the Lost Sheep; the lyrics were written by Elizabeth C. Clephane and the song was widely used in revival and evangelical services, often set to tunes associated with Ira D. Sankey.

**24** In late-19th-century American usage (the novel's context), "the saloon" denotes a commercial establishment that sold alcoholic beverages and served as a social gathering place—an institution that contemporary temperance and social-reform movements frequently criticized and sought to regulate or remove.

**25** In late 19th–early 20th century American usage, a "saloon" was an establishment that served alcoholic drinks and often functioned as a neighborhood social and political meeting place; temperance and social-reform movements commonly criticized saloons for links to vice, poverty, and political corruption.

**26** A "Sunday edition" is a newspaper issue published on Sunday; in the period of this novel some publishers issued special Sunday papers while others abstained from Sunday publication for religious or cultural reasons, so saying one "would not issue a Sunday edition" reflects a Sabbath-related editorial choice common in that era.

**27** Arnold Toynbee (1852–1883) was a British social reformer associated with Toynbee Hall and the late-19th-century settlement movement in London's East End; his work influenced discussions of urban social ministry and "institutional church" efforts referenced in the text.

**28** Refers to the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor, an interdenominational Protestant youth organization founded in 1881 that encouraged members to make pledge-based commitments to active Christian service and was widely influential in late 19th–early 20th century America.

**29** "Packing houses" denotes large meatpacking plants and associated industrial facilities common in American cities (notably Chicago) in the late 19th century. These establishments operated round-the-clock, employing night watchmen and large numbers of laborers in often harsh conditions.

**30** A U.S. federal regulatory agency created by the Interstate Commerce Act of 1887 to oversee railroads and commercial transportation; it served as an investigatory and

regulatory body through the 20th century (its functions were largely eliminated or transferred by the mid-1990s).

**31** A road bridge spanning the River Thames in central London, located near the area of Blackfriars and visible from St. Paul's Cathedral; 18th- and 19th-century writings commonly use it as a recognisable urban setting for dramatic or moral scenes.

**32** An interdenominational Protestant organization founded in the United States in 1881 (by Francis E. Clark) that promoted youth involvement, personal commitments and pledges to live out Christian principles; it was widely influential in late 19th-early 20th century church life.

**33** A "settlement" here refers to a late 19th/early 20th-century settlement house — a neighborhood social-service center that offered education, lodging, and aid to urban poor (famous examples include Hull House in Chicago). In the novel, the Rectangle Settlement is a fictional local institution where charity and community work are carried out.

**34** Refers to the settlement movement of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in which educated volunteers and social reformers lived in poor urban neighborhoods to provide services, education and advocacy; well-known examples include Hull House (Chicago) and University Settlement (New York, founded 1886).

**35** A late-19th/early-20th-century cultural label for women who pursued greater independence, education, paid work, and public roles; the phrase was commonly used in American and British discussions of changing gender roles around the 1890s–1920s.

**36** In late 19th–early 20th-century urban contexts, a “Settlement” refers to a settlement house — a community institution that provided social services, education, and temporary lodging to poor city residents and immigrants as part of contemporary social-reform efforts.

**37** This refers to taking a temperance pledge — a public promise to abstain from alcoholic beverages common in temperance movements of the 19th century and associated societies; such pledges were a widespread method of promoting personal and social abstinence from liquor.

**38** A “pure-food department” here means a program devoted to wholesome food, cooking and household sanitation, reflecting the contemporary Pure Food reform movement that emphasized food safety and honest labeling (a movement that helped lead to the U.S. Pure Food and Drug Act of 1906).

**39** In the novel this refers to the central vow taken by several characters to spend a period deliberately asking “What would Jesus do?” before acting; it frames the story’s moral experiment and later helped popularize the WWJD (What Would Jesus Do) slogan in Christian discourse.