

Sunday Reading.

THE HOUSE-TOP SAINT.

How Aunt Sibyl Preached the Young Man a Helpful Sermon.

"Yes, yes, sonny, I'm mighty fo' handed, and no ways like poo' white trash, nor yet like any of dese onanitized col'd folks dat grab deir liberty like a dog grabs a bone—no thanks to nobody!"

Thus the sable, queenly Sibyl Melvor ended a long boast of her prosperity since she became her own mistress, to a young teacher from the North, as she was arranging his snowy linen in his trunk.

"I'm truly glad to hear of all this comfort and plenty, Sibyl; but I hope your treasures are not all made up on earth. I hope you are a Christian?" asked the young stranger.

Sibyl put up her great hands, and straightened and elevated the horns of her gay turban; and then, planting them on her capacious hips, she looked the headless youth in the eye and exclaimed with a sarcastic smile, "You hope I'm a Christian, do you? Why, sonny, I was a 'spectable sort of a Christian afore your mammy was born, I reckon! But for dese last twenty-five years, I've been a mighty powerful one—one o' de kind dat makes Satan shake in his hoof—I is one of de house top saints, sonny!"

"House-top saints! What kind of saints are those?" asked the young Northerner.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Sibyl; "I thought like's not you never heard tell on 'em, up your way. Dey's mighty scarce anywhar; but de Lord's got one on 'em at any rate, in de place and on dis plantation!" replied Sibyl, triumphantly.

"And that is you?"

"Yes, sonny, dat is me!"

"Then tell me what you mean by being a house-top saint?"

"Well, I mean dat I've been t'rough all de stories of my father's house on arth, from de cellar up; and now I've fairly on de very ruff—yes, de very ridge pole—and dere I sits and sings and sees heaven, like you never sees it t'rough de clouds down yere?"

"How did you get there, Auntie?"

"How does you get from de cellar to de parlor, and from de parlor to de chamber, and from de chamber to de ruff? Why, de builder has put sta's thar, and you sees 'em, and puts your feet on 'em and mounts, ha?"

"But there are the same stairs in our Father's house for all His children, as for you; and yet you say house-top saints are very scarce?"

"Sartin, sonny. Sta's don't get people up 'less dey mounts 'em. It dere was a million o' sta's leading up to glory, it wouldn't help dem dat sits at de bottom and howls and mourns 'bout how helpless dey is? Brudder Adam, dere, dat's a blacking o' your boots, he's de husband o' my bossom, and yet he's nothin' but only a poor down-cellar 'sciple, sittin' in de dark, and whinin' and lamentin' 'cause he ain't up star's! I say to him, says I, 'Brudder—I's allus called him 'Brudder' since he was born into de kingdom—why don't you come up into de light?"

"O, says he, 'Sibby, I's too unworthy; I don't deserve de light dat God has made for de holy ones.'"

"Phoo," says I, "Brudder Adam! Don't you 'member,' says I, 'when our massa done married de gov'ness, arter ole missus' death? Miss Alice was as poor as an unfeathered chicken; but did she go down cellar rite among de pok barr's and de trash 'cause she was poor and wasn't worthy to live up sta's? Not she! She tuk her place at de head o' de table, and w'ar all de lacy and jewelry massa gib her, and hold up her head high, like she was sayin', 'I's no more poor gov'ness, teaching Col'n Melvor's chil'en; but I's de Col'n's b'loved wife, and I stan' for de mother of his chil';' as she had a right to say! And de Col'n love her all de more for her not bein' a fool and sittin' down cellar 'mong de pok barr's!"

"Dere, sonny, dat's de way I talk to Brudder Adam! But so fur it haven't fetched him up! De deluded creature thinks he's humble, when he's only low-minded and grovelin' like! It's unworthy of a blood bought soul for to stick in de cold dark cellar, when he mought live in delight and warm, up on de house-top?"

"That's very true, Sibyl; but few of us reach de house-top!" said the young man thoughtfully.

"Mo' fools you, den!" cried Sibyl. "De house-top is dere, and de sta's is dere, and de grand glorious Master is dere up 'bove all, callin' to you day and night, 'Friend, come up higher!' He reaches down His shinin' han' and offers for to draw you up; but you shakes your head and pulls back and says, 'No, no, Lord; I isn't nothin'.' Is dat de way to treat Him who has bought life and light for you? Oh, shame on you sonny, and on all de down cellar, an' parlor, an' chamber Christians!"

"What are parlor Christians, Auntie?" asked the young man.

"Parlor Christians, honey? Why den is de ones dat gets bar'ly out o' de cellar and goes straightway and forgets what kind o' creatures dey was down heah! Dey grow proud and dresses up fine, like de worl's folks, and dances, and sings worldly trash o' songs, and has only just 'ligion enough to make a show. Our old missus, see used to train 'mong her col'd folks, wuss den King Furio did 'mong de 'Gyptians. But, bless you, de minute de parson or any other good brudder or sister come 'loug, how she did tune up her harp! She was mighty 'ligious in de parlor, but she left her 'ligion dere when she went out."

"I do think missus got to heaven, wid all her infirmities; but she didn't get very high till de bridecome come and called for her! Den she said to me, one dead of night, 'Oh, Sibby, says she—she tight on to my han'—'Oh, Sibby, if you could only go long o' me, and I could keep hold o' your garments, I'd have hope o' gettin' through de shinin' gate!—your clothes, and your face, and your hands shine like silver, Sibby!' says she. 'Dear soul,' says I, 'dis light you see isn't mine!—It all comes 'flected on to poor black Sibyl from de cross; and dere is heaps more of it, to shine on you and every other poor sinner dat will come ner enough to catch de rays!'"

"Oh," says she, 'Sibby, when I heard you shoutin' 'Glory to God!' and talkin' o' Him on de house-top, I thought it was all

sub'stition and ignorance. But now, oh, Sibby, I'd like to touch de hem o' your garment, and wipe de dust off your shoes, if I could only ketch a glimpse o' Christ.'"

"Do you believe dat you's a sinner, missus?" says I.

"Yes, de chief of sinners," says she, with a groan.

"Do you believe dat Christ died for sinners, and is able to carry out his plan?" says I.

"Yes," says she.

"Well, den," says I, "if you's sinner enough, and Christ is Saviour enough, what's to hinder your being saved? Just you quit looking at yourself, and look to Him."

"De she kotch sight o' de cross, and she forgot herself; an' her face lit up like an angel's; and she was a new missus from dat yar hour till she went up. She died a-singing—"

"In my han' no price I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling."

"But she mought a sung all de way along, if she hadn't forgot de humilification o' de cellar, and 'bused de privileges o' de parlor. Parlors is fine things, but dey ain't made for folks to spend deir whole time in."

"What's a chamber-saint, Auntie?" asked the young man.

"Chamber-saints is dem dat's escaped de dark and de scare of de cellar, and de honey-traps o' de parlor, and got through many worries, and so feels a-tired, and is wantin' o' rest. Dey say, 'Well we's got 'long mighty well, and and can now see de way clar up to glory. And sometimes dey forget dat dey's only half-way up, and thinks dey's come off conquerors a-ready. So dey's very apt to lie down wid deir hands folded, thinkin dat Satan isn't nowhere no more! But he is close by 'em, and he smoooves deir soft pillows, and sings 'em to sleep and to slumber; and de work o' de kingdom don't get any help from dem—not for one while! De chamber is de sort o' half-way house, made for rest and comfort; but some turns it into a roosting place. You know Brudder Bunyan, sonny?"

"No."

"What, never heard tell o' John Bunyan?"

"Oh, yes."

"I thought you couldn't all be so ignorant 'bout 'ligion up in Boston, as dat! Well, you know he wrote 'bout a brudder dat got asleep and lost his roll, and dat's what's de matter wid heaps o' Christians in de worl'. Dey fall asleep and lose deir hope."

"And do you keep in this joyful and wakel frame all de time, Auntie?" asked the young learner.

"I does, honey. By de help of de Lord, and a continual watch, I keep de head o' de old sarprint mashed under my heel, pretty general. Why, sometimes, when he rises up and thrusts his fangs out, I have such power given me to stomp on him, dat I can near his bones crack—mosly. I tell you, honey, he don't like me, and he most gin me up for los'."

"Now Sibyl, you are speaking in figures. Tell me plainly how you get de victory over Satan."

"Heap o' ways," she replied. "Sometimes I get up in de mornin', and I sees work enough for two women ahead o' me. Maybe my head done ache and my narves is done rampant; and I hears a voice sayin' in my ear, 'Come on, go what likes, Sibby, dat'ar wark is got to be done! You's sick and tired already! Your lot's a mighty hard one, sister Sibby—Satan often has de impudence to call me 'sister'—and if Adam was only a pearter man, and if Tom wasn't lame, and if Judy and Cle'patry wasn't dead, you could live mighty easy. But just you look at dat dere pile o' shirts to iron, 'sides cookin' for Adam and Tom, and keepin' your house like a Christian oughter.' Dat's how he 'sails me when I'se weak! Den I faces straight about and looks at him, and says, in de word o' Scripture, 'Clar out and get ahind my back, Satan! Dat ar pile of shirts ain't high' enough to hide Him dat is my strength! And sometimes I whisks de shirts up and rolls 'em into a bundle, and heaves 'em back into de clothes basket; and says to 'em, 'You lay down dar till tomorrow, wif you! I ain't no slave to work, nor to Satan! I for can 'ford to wait, and sing a hymn to cheer up my sperits, if I like.' And den Satan drops his tail, and slinks off, most general; and I goes 'bout my work singing:—"

"My Master bruise de sarprint's head, And bind him wid a chain; Come, brudders, hololujah shout, Wid all yer might and main! Hololujah!"

"Does Satan always assail you t'rough your work?" asked the stranger.

"No, bless you, honey; sometime, he 'tacks me t'rough my stummick; and dat's de way he 'tacks rich and grand folks most general. If I eat too hearty o' fat bacon and corn cakes in times gone, I used to get low in 'ligion, and my hope failed, and I den was such a fool I thought Christ had forgotten to be gracious to me! Satan makes great weapons out o' bacon! But I knows better now, and I keep my body under, like Brudder Paul; and nothin' has power to separate me from Him I loves. I'se had sorrows enough to break a dozen hearts dat had no Jesus to shar' 'em wid, but every one on 'em has only forced me nearer to Him. Some folks would like to shirk all trouble on deir way to glory, and swim into a shinin' harbor t'rough a sea of honey! But, sonny, dere's crosses to bear, and I ain't mean enough to want my blessed Jesus to bear 'em all alone. It's my glory here dat I can take hold o' one end o' de cross, and help him up de hill wid de load o' poor, bruised, and wounded, and sick sinners He's got on his hands and His heart to get up to glory! But, la, honey, how de time has flew! I must go home and get Brudder Adam's dinner; for it's one of my articles o' faith never to keep him waiting beyond twelve o'clock when he's hungry and tired, for dat allus gives Satan t'resh 'vantage over him. Come up to my place some day and we'll have more talk about de way to glory."

"Pretty Sacrifices."

The presence of good manners is nowhere more needed or more effective than in the household, and perhaps nowhere more rare. Whenever the familiarity exists there is a tendency to loosen the check upon selfish conduct which the presence of strangers involuntarily produces. Many

persons who are kind and courteous in company are rude and careless with those whom they love best. Emerson says: "Good manners are made up of pretty sacrifices," and certainly nothing can more thoroughly secure the harmony and peace of the family circle than the habit of making small sacrifices one for another.

NOW THAT THERE IS WAR.

And Rumors of War, Dr. Talmage, Like Orestes, Calls for Peace.

Most wars do not pay. A poor way to make up for the destroyed lives of five or six men would be to kill 5,000 men. A poor way to pay for a few thousand damages would be to destroy property worth millions of dollars. What cannot be settled by pen cannot be settled by sword. It is so long now since the Christmas star twinkled through the Bethlehem sky that the world is becoming opposed to bloodshed. Men die too fast by grip, by consumption, by pneumonia, by railroad smashups, by boiler explosions, to make any whole-sale murder by battle desirable. Arbitration has already done the work which in earlier days would have been tempted by cannonade. The fishery dispute between Canada and the United States and the Behring sea difference, if they had occurred seventy years ago, would have put our fathers in the sea with loaded musket and English men-of-war would have met American men-of-war on the high seas and their decks would have been slippery with the carnage.

War is a relic of barbarism, and civilization will yet have no more to do with it than with thumb screws and iron boots of torture and martyrs' stakes. The time is coming—if not in your day and mine, then in the days afterward—when wandering in some museum of antiquities a child shall take hold of a sword and say, "Father, what was that for?" and the answer will be, "My child, that is what was called a sword in the barbaric ages." "What did they do with it?" the child will ask. "Cut people's heads off and thrust their bodies through and through," will answer the father. "Is it possible?" will say the child. "What are those round pieces of iron?" "Bullets." "What were they for?" "Well, those were shot out of guns to break human jaws and put out human eyes and make people go limping through life, while others were tumbled into graves, and the land was filled with widowhood and orphanage." Then the child will ask: "Were there any good people in those days?" "Oh, yes," will say the father. "Well, why didn't they stop it?" Then the father will say: "Oh, they couldn't stop it."

We are coming near the close of this nineteenth century. No doubt it has been the most enlightened and the most kindly of all the centuries, but what a record of bloodshed and financial expenditure! In two score years over \$12,000,000,000 spent in war, and 1,743,000 men killed in battle. And still we are building forts, and still Russia and Germany and England and France and Italy and the United States are talking about putting things on a war footing. How long, oh, Lord, how long? May the God of peace take possession of all nations. Let us talk peace and write peace and sing peace and pray peace until the last quarrel in all the earth shall be buried and the question how to save life instead of how to destroy it, how to bless instead of how to curse, shall employ all the ingenuity of the nations. Do you not really think that it is time the cavalry horse stopped eating out of the manger in which Christ was born?

THE HAPPIEST TIME OF LIFE.

We Should Strive to Make All Our Lives as Happy as Childhood.

"That childhood is 'the happiest time of life' is a hackneyed phrase, but is it true? There may be a difference of opinion, but I think, while childhood ought to be happy and care free, that life ought to grow richer and better with every added year."

A woman whom I know well has endured a great deal in her thirty years of life, but she is happy and sees the bright side of life. As a child she had no real home, being left an orphan and obliged to take upon herself a woman's work long before her time. Her battle with the world was so hard, that twenty years of age found her sick and a helpless invalid. After seven years of physical and mental suffering, she was able to take up her work in the world again, but life's hard lessons had not made her either a pessimist or a cynic.

She says, "The idea that childhood is the happiest time in life is absurd. The child ought to be happy, and the human being ought to be happy all the way along."

If we could all live up to this, what a pleasant place this world of ours would be. There is a sort of Spartan doctrine held by some parents, that what is generally termed "petting" will unfit their children for a struggle with the world, should that struggle come. The idea of withholding loving words and appreciation from a child, to make it better able to cope with the hard world, is a good deal on the principle of withholding food that when the famine comes the privations will be less felt.

Life, for the true man or woman, grows richer and brighter every day, and the wealth of happiness is within reach of all. Especially is this true of a mother, the choicest joys of life are hers. She has her treasures, whatever losses there may be in the mercantile life, whatever fall there may be in real estate or however the money market may stand.

If life does not grow better for us as we grow older, is it not our own fault? There are riches which are possible for every one, but we cannot gain them by searching for other people's faults or by treasuring our own troubles. Love is the best wealth that earth or heaven holds.

Life grows rich as it grows old, And life's latest sands are its sands of gold.

A Jew's Remarkable Words.

A remarkable utterance by the famous ethical teacher, Felix Adler, is quoted by the Congregationalist. He is reported as saying: "I am, as you know a Jew. For more than eighteen centuries my race has been shut out from its own. Even the name of Jesus was not mentioned among us. After these eighteen centuries I and others like myself, emerging from this isolation, come face to face with one who was ours, of whom, strangely enough, we have been bereaved, of whose deep influence we have not felt the benefits. I hardly know whether you who have been nurtured under Christian influence, who have breathed the

atmosphere of Jesus' thought since your childhood, can put yourself entirely into the place of one who comes to him as a new-comer, and is amazed and reft at what he finds."

Gospel Work in Italy.

Since Rev. Edward Clarke began his school work among the children of Italy, great good has been accomplished. A clergyman who has been helping in the school wrote that the progress of late has been almost remarkable. To-day, as they looked from Turin and the east of Venice and the Alps, they would see some thirty stations, Sabbath after Sabbath, God's word is preached, and where services are also held on the week day. They would see eight Sunday schools also and nineteen day schools at word during the week. If they looked at these schools they could see them attended by seven hundred children coming from Roman Catholic homes every day, a fact which certainly would not be without its important influence in the future. God has been graciously multiplying workers and sending them on from village to village. Some years ago there had been a terrible visitation of cholera: it was sad and sudden and yet good had come of it. Roman Catholic priests went everywhere visiting, and the workers of the Mission did the same. Finally it led to the work being handed over to the Mission who had offered to take care of the children.

The Old Man's Blessing.

A clerk and his country farther entered a restaurant one evening lately, and took seats at a table, at which sat a telegraph operator and a reporter. The old gentleman bowed, and was about to say good, when a waiter hurried up, crying out:

"Beefsteak, codfish balls and sausages." Father and son gave their orders, and the former again bowed his head. The young man turned the color of a blood-red beet, and, touching his arm, exclaimed in a low nervous tone:

"Father, it isn't customary to do that in restaurants."

"It's customary with me to return thanks to God, wherever I am," said the old man. For the third time he bowed his head, and the telegraph operator paused in the act of carving his beefsteak and bowed his head, and the reporter put back his fish-ball and bowed his head, and there wasn't a man who heard the short and simple prayer that didn't feel respect for the old farmer in thus showing faithfulness to his religious belief.

Messages of Help for the Week.

"I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy tear will I worship toward thy holy temple."—Psalm 5:7.

"Cleanse thou me from secret faults."—Psalm 19:12.

"Feed me with food convenient for me."—Prov. 30:8.

"If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land."—Isaiah 1:19.

"We know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren."—John 3:14.

"The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you."—Luke 8:11.

"Where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth."—Prov. 26:20.

Blasts from "The Ram's Horn."

All heaven listens when we send up a heartfelt prayer for an enemy's good.

The devil never asks anybody to go very far away from home with him the first time.

When people get to quarrelling about their creeds, the devil steps being anxious about their deeds.

An empty cradle is a convincing argument for a future life. A dead babe brings a father very near to heaven.

"For Years,"

Says CARIE E. STOCKWELL, of Chesterfield, N. H., "I was afflicted with an extremely severe pain in the lower part of the chest. The feeling was as if a ton weight was laid on a spot the size of my hand. During the attacks, the perspiration would stand in drops on my face, and it was agony for me to make sufficient effort even to whisper. They came suddenly, at any hour of the day or night, lasting from

thirty minutes to half a day, leaving as suddenly; but, for several days after, I was quite prostrated and sore. Sometimes the attacks were almost daily, then less frequent. After about four years of this suffering, I was taken down with bilious typhoid fever, and when I began to recover, I had the worst attack of my old trouble I ever experienced. At the first of the fever, my mother gave me Ayer's Pills, my doctor recommending them as being better than anything he could prepare. I continued taking these pills, and so great was the benefit derived that during nearly thirty years I have had but one attack of my former trouble, which yielded readily to the same remedy."

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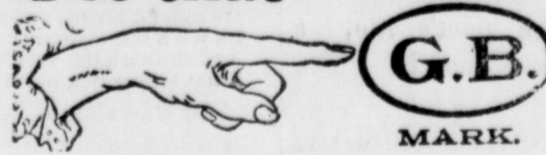
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