

Sunday Reading.

Always a river to cross.

There's always a river to cross;
Always an effort to make
If there's anything good to win,
Any rich prize to take.
Yonder the fruit we crave
Yonder the charming scene;
But deep and wide, with a troubled tide,
Is the river that lies between.

For the treasures of precious worth
We must patiently dig and dive:
For the places we long to fill
We must push and struggle and strive,
And always and everywhere
We'll find in our onward course
Thorns for the feet and trials to meet
And a difficult river to cross.

For the rougher the wave that we take,
The stouter the heart and the nerve;
The stones in our path we break,
Nor e'er from our impulse swerve.
For the glory we hope to win
Our labors we count no loss;
'Tis folly to pause and murmur because
Of the river we have to cross.

So ready to do and to dare
Should we in our places stand,
Fulfilling the Master's will,
Fulfilling the soul's demand;
For though as the mountain high
The billows may war and toss,
They'll not overwhelm if the Lord's at the
When the difficult river we cross. [helm

My Saint John.

BY JAMES W. LUDLOW.

'Wud yer riv'nce come an' see a
mon what's dyin'?'
The speaker, who came to the base-
ment door of a city clergyman's house,
was one of the worst bedraggled women
off Blackwell's Island. Her voice was
as husky and weak in tone as it was
strong with the smell of whiskey. Her
face was a cold and villainous one—
only that at first glance; but a second
discovered the slightest trace of anxiety,
just enough to suggest that her woman's
nature was not entirely burned out, and
that some sparks of sympathy, maybe of
love, for somebody, still glowed among
its ashes. Her address led into a section
of the city which is almost as com-
plete terra incognita to our worthy and
even philanthropic metropolitans as is
the land of King Mtesa. In the back
basement of a filthy tenement house the
old hag, who had preceded the visitor,
welcomed him to what only the evident
fact would warrant calling a human
habitation. What had once been a
kitchen pantry was now converted into
a chamber, where there lay a man,
about sixty years of age, of hard, yet
rather intelligent, countenance, and the
shrunken remnant of a once powerful
body. Starvation was evidently accel-
erating the work of hasty consumption.

An inquiry if he had no friends
brought the response.

'Plinties on 'em whin ye con go till
'em, an' there's a bit in yer pocky for a
drink. All the b'ys longshore knows
ole John; but missin's not mindin', an'
no one but yersil' an' the ole woman's
acrost the doersill for four days an'
nights. They says till thim-ils, 'May's
how the ole cove's shipped agin', though
it's knowin' they are that me bulks
aground agin the graveyard.'

Daily visits to him while he 'kept
afloat' and the little comforts which
were brought him—not the least of
which was the 'bourbon' prescribed by
a physician, and whose taste, though
administered homoeopathically, was 'like
friendship itself'—soon established the
utmost familiarity between John and
his riv'nce, who thus had an oppor-
tunity to study human nature in its raw
material, unmolded by any conven-
tionalities of society, and unlooked by that
autism, if, indeed, it be not hypocrisy,
with which we ordinarily conceal our-
selves from our best friends. Perhaps
both felt that the difference was slight
between the real humanity which but-
toned itself in broadcloth and that which
was wrapped in the pauper's blanket.

Of his early life John could give no
very clear account. Of his ancestors
he said: 'They niver took no 'spon-
sibility for me, an' I niver felt no 'spon-
sibility for askin' atther thim.' To the
best of his belief, in his voyage into
this world he 'made port' in England.
While a mere child, he fell into the grip
of that stern law of the 'survival of the
fittest,' and, being fit for nothing on land,
took to the sea. For nearly half a
century he had drifted about the world,
seeing only the lowest forms of civiliza-
tion, among that morally amphibious

population along the wharves of sea-
ports, which may be said to live half
the time in this world and half in hell.
Ship law, under shadow of the yard-
arm and cat-o'-nine-tails, was his high-
est code of morals, and dread of death
his highest attainment in religion.

It was this last characteristic which
led him to send for the clergyman. He
knew almost nothing of the doctrines of
the Bible, and said, honestly, 'I'm no
praste's mon, an' no Protestant naither
—I'm jist a poor soul what's a-dyin'.'

John's interest in 'the Book' was
first caught by the reading of David's
description of a storm at sea.

'The man what wrote that, sir, fol-
ler'd the sea. Was he a captain?'

Upon being assured that the Psalmist
was first a shepherd boy, then a soldier
and a king, but never a sailor, he de-
clared, 'Ah! mister, yer much larnin'
deceives ye: for yese there's evidence
in's manner o' spack that 'im whet
wrote it was a sailor lad, or may's like
a venturer on the wather. Now list!
'Their soul's milted because o' trouble.'
It's 't'zactly. I'se niver frighted in
the storm; but me soul's jist milted
mony's the time. 'At their wit's ind I'
an' 'Cry till the Loard!' Ye see,
mister, I didn' know nothin' 'bout the
Loard, an' av' tol' 'im to damn me ofin,
because I didn' b'laive ther' was any
Loard. But when the soul's milted ye
'opes as 'ow ther' may be a Loard look-
in' after yez in the storm, but not think-
in' it worth's while to be a-follerin' o'
ye win yes only foolin' an' profanin',
an' don't mane what yez sayin', but
only askin' o' 'im to damn yez playfu-
like.'

From that time David was treated
with all the confidence of an intimate
friend by John, who was ready to hear
what the 'seafarin' king' had to say.

Another biblical acquaintance was
introduced to the sick man in a similar
manner by the reading of the story of
St. Paul's shipwreck. It happened that
John had often 'fared 'long' that same
north coast of the Mediterranean, and
been 'driven up and down in Adria.'
Once he had expected the ship to go to
pieces at the base of the Taurus. The
rocky pinnacles of the Sporades were
hung with mementoes of his drifting
among them. His manner became
tragic as, with wild tones and gesticu-
lation, losing himself in actual mania
with the vividness of his remembrance
or the morbidity of his imagination, he
described an awful night off Sicily.
driv through the blackness, an' the white
foam was like devil's fingers r-reachin'
out o' it; divils a-roarin' in the timpist
an' acraichin' in the riggin'; but there
must ha' bin a hangel somewhere, for
in the mornin' the ship stood as livel as
the risin' suabane. But, mister, me
ole craft's goin' down this time. An'
was ye arn't when ye said a hangel
would git on board o' me now likes?
Loard o' mercy, sind th' hangel, for
John's at 's wits' ind!

From exhaustion the poor fellow fell
back in unconsciousness upon the pillow.
After this he was always anxious to
'hear a bit o' what said the lad what
saved the ship,' meaning St. Paul.

In response to the reading, 'Not one
doeth good, no, not one,' he confessed
that he had been a bad man.

'But why's the not, sir? Ye can't
make posies grow in ship's ballast, an'
sailor lads ain't saints nat'ral like. But,
mister, I'll no beman me! before ye,
or though I'm no good un, it's honest I
am whin I testifies till ye that John
niver sthiffened nobody what wasn't
worse nor 'im, 'cept's maybe whin the
shore-grog was in; but alack! yer
Davy an' yer Paul wud niver let that
count agin a ship's lad.'

But John could not feel self-complac-
ent. 'D'ye know what troubles me?
It's a-thinkin' of that sailor king and
'other lad, as clane souls in this wicked
worl' as yon sun-peep on the dirty floor,
an' the one o' 'em a-sayin', 'Me sin's
ive afore me,' an' to 'other sayin', 'I'm
no more clane nor a dead corpus, than
a body o' death; an' all accuse them
gem'men had seen likes it was the face
o' God! an' maybes how I'll see the
face o' God, too! an' maybes how He's a-
lookin' at me now, an' a-readin' me log,
and a takin' off me flesh, so's to git a
look clane through me soul.'

The visitor quoted the Bible promises
of forgiveness to such as are sorry for,
and confess their sins.

'Sorry for 'em! But devil was I
sorry for 'em when I did 'em, an' I feel

kind o' mane to say as how's I'm sorry
for 'em now, when I can't do 'em no
more. Mayhap, mister, if that in the
bottle there 'ud make me stout an' han-
dy the morrow, I'd no be sorry for 'em.
An' don't the Loard know that John
don't know hisil' when he says as how's
he's sorry? O Loard! is it sorry, or
feared I am? An' confess 'em? How
'ud that diffrence the Almighty? He
knows 'em allriddy. Doesn't Davy say
he did 'm 'in Thysight? Ay, ay, sir,
He saw 'em plainer nor I did mesil'.
An' whyfore confess 'em? 'Twould be
like sinnin' 'em over agin to tell 'em.
I'll no confess 'em, the dirty, bloody
things! I'll no think o' 'em. But what's
I'm sayin'? I'll no think o' 'em?'
Alack! they think thimself's into me.
They're likes to the crew'do' dead men,
with dead faces a starin' out o' the rig-
gin', an' up from the hatches, an' a-
blinkin' in the shiplights, an' a-moanin'
down in th' hold—allers there!

'I don't mind a confession till ye,
yer riv'nce, for though yer a 'oly
perfshon, ye's got, maybe, a sin o' yer
own, an' wadn't be too hard-thoughted
on a sailor lad. Oh, it's a long wake
o' sins John's got behin' 'im, an' it
don't die down like, but stays there a-
markin' me cruise. I can see it (map-
in' it with his finger pointing to the
walls) like a great white sarpiant, lyin'
across both the great seas, an' kinkin'
itsil' up into ivry port I iver dropped
anchor in. An' th' Loard's a-lookin'
at it too. Ye says th' Loard will for-
gie me. Na! na! it's not reason He
will. Isn't th' Loard juser nor me?
But I'm no so bad a mon as iver to
forgie mesil', an' how's th' Loard o'
goodniss goin' to forgi John? I thank
yer riv'nce for yer intintion to com-
fort a poor felly, but ye can't be manin'
it; it's not reason-like.'

An explanation of the doctrine of
salvation through Christ, ending with a
quotation from the Psalm, 'As far as
the east is from the west, so far hath He
removed our transgressions from us,'
brought David into temporary disrepute
with the sick man. 'But that sailor
king was no' much of a sailor. He
niver wint aroun' the 'arbh, or he'd niver
said nothin' 'bout the far o' th' aste an'
th' wist. Ye cud no measure th' far
that's betwixt 'em wi' all th' longi-
tudes, than y'd fathom th' ocean diph't
wi' th' log-line.'

The next day, however, he accosted
his visitor with—'I've thought all th'
night 'bout th' a-te an' the wist. That
Davy was a mighty navigator, sure.
I axes pardon for suspicuin' 'im. An'
an' thim words o' his has sailed all
'roun' me soul. Let me 'splain till yez
th' aste an' wist. D'ye list? Th'
fastest ship what iver cut water, crowd-
in' her sails wi' barricane abame, or wi'
stame or the divil in her biler, startin'
in th' aste 'ud niver come till th' wist.
Th' wist's a 'orizon what's allers a re-
cadin' an' recadin' as ye goes atther it.'

'Now list till I makes known till yez
Captain Davy, his manin'. John's sins
is like th' wist, all a-flamin' rid, as whin
sun's goin' down, scarlet like as ye rid
yesterday; an' John's th' ship a-drivin'
after 'em with's conscience a-thumpin'
an' all his soul a-creakin'; but th'
Loard o' mercy's a a-drivin' 'em away!
an' by'n by he'll plump 'em down out
o' John's sight for ever an' iver. I think
mister, as how's it was th' hangel told
me that man's last night, whin th' ole
woman was sleepin', an' th' ile was
gone; for it seemed day like, an' th'
quiet, wi' not a rat a-gnawin', was
spackelf like. Maybe I dram'd it.
But mightn't dyin' be dramin'? Now,
yer riv'nce, ony time ye sees I'm
unisy an' frighted, jist say till me,
'Aste an' wist! John, aste an' wist!'

For sometimes thim sins comes a-rushin'
on me like seas astern, an' I'm hanchor-
ed like wi' me bad feelin' an' can't ride
'em, an' as th' captin says, 'All th'
billows goes over me.' Then I thinks,
'Tain't seas like, John; it's aste an' wist
like! an' I falls to dramin' agin.'

John had still a great trouble. He
could not overcome the natural shrink-
ing from death.

'Yer riv'nce, do ye likes the wor-
ms? I cud ate the worms asier than
I can bear to think o' the worms
a-aitin' o' me. D'ye mind that arram
(showing the shrunken muscles of his
arm)? It cud sthiffen ony mon on ship-
board; but ho'v thin it's got! Maybes
how's the worms inside it now an'
tastin' me, for dinner's riddy. An'

d'ye mind th' injy ink, th' hanchor, an'
me 'initials, 'J,' an' 'O' forjinst it.
Ow! th' nasty worum 'll crawl along
an' ate out th' 'J,' an' th' hanchor an'
th' 'O'! Ate me body and ate me
name! The shrunken form gathered
itself up in a convulsive heap beneath
the blankets, and moaned: 'Ow! the
dirty worums. I don't want to die!'

The clergyman talked to him of the
resurrection, and reminded him of the
promise in the Book of Revelation:
'I will write upon him my new name.'
And 'His (God's) name shall be in
their foreheads.'

John's face emerged from the blan-
kets: 'Say that agin, mister.' And,
after a few moments' pause: 'Wud
ye mind haulin' through that agin?'

A deep light seemed to fill his sunk-
en eyes as if his whole soul was con-
densed in them. The harsh features re-
laxed into something very like beauty.
A little superstition would have seen a
light overspreading the features and
the halo about the head. The clergy-
man saw neither of these; but thought
of them, and thought, too, of the title
which is prefixed to the story—'My
Saint John.'

In a few moments the man came out
of his rhapsody, and in a voice which
itself told of the elation of his thoughts:
'I'm goin', thin, until the next worl'
like's a new-born baby; an' God He's
me father; an' He'll christen me wi
a new name, an' He'll name me atther
Hissil' jist as if I'd niver lived afore;
an' neither th' saints nor divils 'll know
nothin' o' old John an' his sins.'

He raised himself with the remnant
of his fast-failing strength, and, lifing
both arms, cried out, as if passing into
the vision, 'Oh, but that's glorious!
that's glorious! I thank me God! and
fell back upon the pillow in utter ex-
haustion.

The next day the clergyman was met
at the street-door by some wretched
woman, who said: 'You've no need
to go there agin, sir. He's dead.'

Entering the little back basement,
there lay the lifeless form on the floor,
a pool of blood at the mouth, and the
miserable hag he had called his wife
dead drunk across the body. John had
been taken with a hemorrhage and
fallen from his bed, to die upon the
floor. This was twelve hours before the
visitor's call, and though the house was
crowded with tenement humanity, no
one had so much as touched the body
to care for it.

That night however, when the visitor
called, he found the room filled with a
wild, drunken crew of women and men
who, with the instinct of ravens, had
found the dead body, and were prepar-
ing to 'wake the corpse.' In one cor-
ner sat the widow, sufficiently re-
covered from her drunken stupor to
croon her maudlin grief and snarl and
snap at the men who, under pretense of
giving John a 'dacin' sid off,' were
robbing her of the bits of silver which
the clergyman had given her husband.
The police were summoned. The dead
body and its living relic were protected
during the night from the attack of
these ghouls.

The day following, the clergyman
was waited upon by a rough but rather
fine-featured man, who stood awkard-
ly clutching his hat with both hands, and
making obeisances sufficient to have
sustained the dignity of an ambassador
of the Sultan. Finally, straightening
himself, he said: 'Be you's the clergy
what knowed John?—?' On being
assured affirmatively, the visitor an-
nounced:

'I'm appointed, yer riv'nce, to in-
form yer riv'nce that we's goin' to
pervide him what's gone with a fuss-
class fun'ral; and wud yer riv'nce boss
the 'casion?'

The clergyman expressed his readi-
ness to do anything to attest his respect
for the memory of one in whom he had
become so deeply interested; but ven-
tured to ask what society the man rep-
resented, and what provisions had been
made for the interment.

To which he responded: 'We's no
society, an' no fellowship, 'cept the fel-
lows o' not knowin' much about one
anither. We's the b'ys, some from
ship and some from 'longshore, what
used to see John after the consumption
struck 'im, an' he couldn't go no more
to mast nor roll a barl on dock. An'
when we missed 'im, we kind o' thought
what had come till 'im. So we jist
chipped in a quarter or a tenpence,

everybody what knowed the old cove,
an' we dragged for 'im till we got 'im
last night.

'Ye needn't have no manner o' fear
about th' fun'ral, boss! beg pardin',
yer riv'nce! We b'lives in stickin'
to a cove till he's planted hansom'.
Once knowed niver forgot till's name's
scratched on th' stan! that's our feelin'.

Got a coffin stained like 'hogany, wi'
white nails on't an' a door-plate wi's
name as near's we know'd it, to sort o'
interdoosh 'm. Don't b'lieve in a
feller goin' in wi' th' speerits s'if h'
was no better nor a foundlin'. Fly yer
flag, ole feller, as ye sails into port o'
hivin' or t' other place! we all says 'bout
John. We's goin' to have a fuss-class
hearse, unless it goes back on us; for
the coffin man said he didn't want his
'stablishment stan'in' 'roun' thim slums;
an' a carridge for the widdy an' you
an' me; an' all the b'ys is a-comin',
bein' Sunday: an' ole John's goin' to
have sich a sind-off to 'im that I hopes
he'll git so good a reception where he's
goin' to.'

The clergyman, stipulating that it
should be an orderly funeral, not like
the scene he had witnessed the night
before, the master of ceremonies de-
clared: 'Give us your grip on it, yer
riv'nce. It shall be a clane fun'ral,
or, bedad, we'll bury more'n ole John.'

At the time appointed the minister
presented himself at the back basement
door. The little room was packed with
humanity, exhumed from the lower
strata of society. There were rum-sod-
den old men, and devil-may-care young
men, and here and there the frowzy
head of an unsexed female. No hat
was removed. Every mouth held its
pipe or cigar-stump, and through the
thick smoke one could discern the shape
of the coffin, and through the din of
voices catch the drunken wail of the
chief and only mourner.

'B'ys, the clergy's come!' announced
the caller of the morning. 'Tak' off
yer hats and douse yer tabakky!' The
last order met with general disapproba-
tion, expressed in such terms as, 'Th'
clergy 'll no care!' 'John 'll no smell
it!' 'If John can no sthand tabakky,
'ow 'll he sthand th' brimstun!' An
ominous show of shirt-sleeves on the
part of the leader, and the injunction,
'Observe th' civilities!' from some of
the more venerable ones, were, how-
ever, effective, and the meeting was soon
reduced to a degree of order which may
be denominated the mumbling and shuf-
fling state, but which in its contrast with
the preceding was sufficiently solemn to
suggest the commencement of the ser-
vice. Elbowing and ankling his way
to the head of the coffin, the clergyman
read a few verses of Scripture, with the
accompaniment of such Selahs as—

'Stap yer scrougin'!

'Wad yez tip the corpus?'

'Na, be asy in prinsice o' the dead.'

'I'll put yez in wi' John, if ye na
mind yersil'.'

'Riv'nce the clergy!'

With the first lull the clergyman
began.

'My friends, we have—'

At which point a serious-faced old
soaker said: 'Wud yer riv'nce 'low
a sintimint? As ye said, we's frinds
frinds together, an' John's frinds. The
clergy's right!'

The clergyman resumed: 'It was
permitted me to have but a brief ac-
quaintance with the deceased, but—'

'We know'd 'im, though,' said the
interlocutor. 'Sivinteen year wi' 'im
on shipboard, an' niver out o' me eye
since was John.'

'We know'd 'im,' chimed a dozen
voices.

The minister saw at once that any
connected discourse was out of the
question, and, as best he could, adapted
his speech to the colloquial disposition
of his auditors. 'Well,' said he, 'if you
knew him so well, why did no one of
you go to see him when he was sick?'

He told me that none of you had come
to give him a kind word. It is well to
bury his corpse honorably; but don't
you think that it would have been bet-
ter to have cared for his poor body when
it could have felt your kindness?'

'But, mister, what cud we talk be
sayin' to a cove what's dyin'? We's
not praste folk,' said one with real hon-
esty of face and manner.

'True,' said the clergyman, 'you of
yourselves could tell him nothing about
death and life beyond; but you could
have told him you were sorry for him.'

You might have sat by him during some
of those long nights, and help him to a
drink. And may be his hand would not
have grown cold so soon if some of you
had now and then held it for him in
real sympathy.

'B'ys, said a dilapidated creature,
who tried to straighten himself against
the corner so as to attract attention,
'b'ys, the clergy's right. Yez orter be
more shimpathitic. We's drinkt wi'
John-whin h' was on 's feet, an' we's
orter coddled to 'im whin h' was on 's
back.'

'Our friend who has departed,' re-
sumed the preacher, 'in telling me
something about his life, confessed that
he had been a very sinful man, and—'

'Sintu', is it,' said one to another,
'John was no sinfu'.'

'But,' replied the man so addressed,
'John was no good. He was a hard
un.'

'Ay,' was the rejoinder; 'but a hard
un is no sinfu' hypocrat. John was no
sinfu' at all.'

The clergyman took the occasion to
explain that to be a 'hard case' and no
'good' was equivalent to being sinful;
and that the Bible did not mean by
sinners meek-faced people, who went
to church publicly and served the devil
in private; and then repeated to his
audience John's statement that, bad as
he was, he was no worse than the rest
of them on shipboard.

'Ay, yer riv'nce has us right. We's
nane o' us good,' said a rough voice, in
subdued tone.

'And that is just what the Bible tells
us,' said the minister. 'There is not
one that doeth good; no, not one.'

'Is that in th' Book?' inquired one.

'Bedad, but it's thrue, though it be in
th' Book.'

The speaker assured them that, if
they would read the Book, they would
find that it knew them thoroughly, even
better than they did themselves. But
he thought that John was not so bad a
man as he made himself out to be, be-
cause he was so willing and frank in con-
fessing his faults.

'Yer right agin,' responded one.
'I've observed that th' worst mon is
th' mon what won't let on till it. The
hypocrit is th' divilist. I wud no forgie
my own brother if he no confess his
faults.'

'There, again, you see how you and
the Bible agree,' said the clergyman.
'The Book, jist as if there was a living
spirit in it, which read your thoughts
as clearly as you read its letters, says:
'If we say that we have no sin, we de-
ceive ourselves, and the truth is not in
us. If we confess our sins, He is faith-
ful to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse
us from all unrighteousness.''

'Is that in th' Book?' asked the
former questioner. 'Bedad, I dinna
faith th' Book; but that's thrue, though
th' Book do say it.'

The preacher then told the story of
his various conversations with John,
much as has been related in the former
part of this narrative, illustrating by
John's experience the Scripture prom-
ises, and drawing from his audience
more responses than would have been
heard in any of our liturgical churches,
and those which showed as hearty con-
viction of the truths of sin and grace as
are usually breathed into scented hand-
kerchiefs or lifted by choir incense into
groined ceilings. From boisterous
thoughtlessness, the company soon
passed into a serio-comic state of mind
and ultimately into undoubted solemn-
ity. Religious truths which are trite
to my readers were thoroughly novel
to that audience, and dogmatic state-
ments which we have trained ourselves
to doubt were received as axiomatic.

To the clergyman came a new evidence
of the inspiration of the Scripture, for
he seemed to find rudimentary traces of
the great doctrines of the faith in the
native convictions of the commonest
humanity.

There seemed no division of senti-
ment among his hearers until he spoke
of the 'basis of salvation,' when he was
interrupted by—

'Will the clergy shup a bit, an' tell
us jist what is the fundament of salva-
tion?'

The questioner was answered from
the other side of the room by a man as
bristling with excitement as was his
chin with a seven days' beard, who,
with one hand clenched, shook the fore-
finger of the other at his antagonist,
while he shrieked, 'Whist ye thar;