

# Samantha Among the Colored Folks

“MY IDEAS ON THE RACE PROBLEM”

By

JOSIAH ALLEN’S WIFE  
(MARIETTA HOLLEY)

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*To all who work for the  
advancement of true liberty,  
irrespective of color or sex, this  
book is inscribed.*

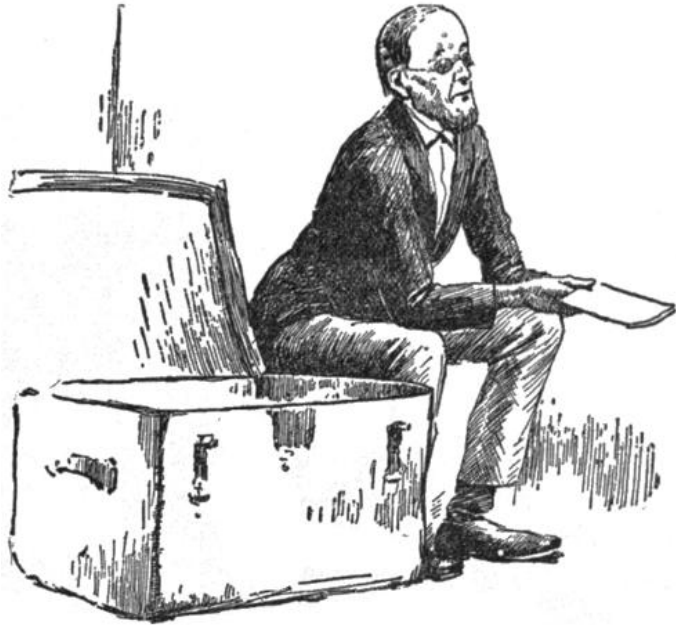
*MARIETTA  
HOLLEY*

*Bonnie View  
May, 1894*

## PUBLISHER'S NOTE.

SAMANTHA ON THE RACE PROBLEM was the title adopted for the editions of this book that were issued exclusively for the subscription market.

In preparing the new edition for popular sale it has been deemed advisable to change its title to SAMANTHA AMONG THE COLORED FOLKS as one more in keeping with its character. Otherwise its contents remain the same.



“THEY WUZ TRACTS AND BIBLES.”



# CHAPTER I.

IT was entirely unexpected and onlooked for.

But I took it as a Decree, and done as well as I could, which is jest as well as anybody ought to be expected to do under any circumstances, either on my side or on hisen.

It was one of the relations on his side that come on to us entirely unexpected and on the evenin' stage that runs from Jonesville to Loontown. He was a passin' through this part of the country on business, so he stopped off at Jonesville to see us.

He come with his portmanty and a satchel, and I mistrusted, after consultin' them signs in the privacy of my own mind, that he had come to stay for quite a spell.

But I found in the fulness of time that my worst apprehensions wuz not realized.

I found instead of pantaloons and vests and things which I suspected wuz in the big satchel, I found out they wuz tracts and Bibles.

Why, I wuz fairly took aback when I discovered this fact, and felt guilty to think I had been cast down, and spozed things that wuzn't so.

But whether they are on his side or on your own, visitors that come when you are deep in house-cleanin', and most all your carpets took up, and your beds oncorded, and your buttery shelves dry and

arid, can't be welcomed with quite the cordiality you would show one in more different and prosperous times.

But we found out after a little conversation that Cousin John Richard Allen wuz a colporter, and didn't lay out to stay only one night. So, as I say, I done the best I could with him, and felt my conscience justified.

He had a dretful good look to his face, for all mebbly he wouldn't be called beautiful. His eyes wuz deep and brilliant and clear, with a meanin' in 'em that comes from a pure life and a high endeavor—a generous, lovin' soul.

Yes, though it wuz one on his side instid of mine, justice makes me say he seemed to be a good feller, and smart as a whip, too. And he seemed to feel real friendly and cousinly towards us, though I had never laid eyes on him more than once or twice before. Josiah had known him when they wuz boys.

He had lived in Vermont, and had been educated high, been through college, and preachin' schools of the best kind, and had sot out in life as a minister, but bein' broke up with quinsy, and havin' a desire to be in some Christian work, he took to colporterin', and had been down in the Southern States to work amongst the freedmen for years.

He went not long after the war closed. I guess he hated to give up preachin', for I believe my soul that he wanted to do good, and bein' so awful smart it wuz a cross, I know—and once in a while he would kind o' forget himself, and fall into a sort o' preachin', eloquent style of talkin', even when he wuz conversin' on such subjects as butter, and hens, and farmin', and such. But I know he did it entirely unbeknown to himself.

And to the table—the blessin' he asked wuz as likely a one as I ever see run at anybody's table, but it wuz middlin' lengthy, as long about as a small-sized sermon.

Josiah squirmed—I see he did, he squirmed hard, though he is a good Christian man. He wuz afraid the cream biscuit would be spilte by the delay; they are his favorites, and though I am fur from bein' the one that ought to speak of it, my biscuit are called delicious.

And though I hate to say it, hate to show any onwillingness to be blessed to any length by so good a man and so smart a one—yet I must say them biscuit wuzn't the biscuit they would have been had the blessin' been more briefer, and they had been eat earlier.

Howsomever, they wuz pretty good ones after all, and Cousin John Richard partook of five right along one after the other, and seemed to enjoy the fifth one jest as well as he did the earlier editions. They wuzn't very large, but light, and tender.

Wall, after supper, he and my pardner sot down in the settin'-room, while I wuz a washin' up the dishes, and a settin' the sponge for my griddle-cakes for breakfast.

And I hearn 'em a talkin' about Uncle Noah, and Uncle Darius, and Cousin Melinda, and Sophronia Ann, and Aunt Marrier and her children—and lots more that I had never hearn of, or had forgot if I had.

They seemed to be a takin' solid comfort, though I see that Cousin John Richard every time he got a chance would kinder preach on 'em.

If there wuz a death amongst 'em that they talked over, John Richard would, I see, instinctively and unbeknown to himself preach a little funeral sermon on 'em, a first-rate one, too, though flowery, and draw quite a lot of morals. Wall, I thought to myself, they are a takin' sights of comfort together, and I am glad on it. I dearly love to see my pardner happy.

When all of a sudden, jest as I had got my sponge all wet up, and everything slick, and I wuz a washin' my hands to the sink, I see there wuz a more excited, voyalent axent a ringin' out in my pardner's voice, I see he wuz a gettin' het up in some argument or other, and I hurried and changed my gingham bib apron for a white one, and took my knittin' work and hastened into the room, bein' anxious to avert horstilities, and work for peace.

And I see I wuz only jest in time; for my companion wuz a gettin' agitated and excited to a high degree, and Cousin John Richard all roused up.

And the very first words I hearn after I went in wuz these offensive and quarrelsome words that do so much to stir up strife and dessionsions—

They have madded me time and agin. They proceeded out of my companion's mouth, and the words wuz:

“Oh shaw!”

I see in a minute that John Richard couldn't brook 'em. And I wunk to Josiah Allen to stop, and let Cousin John Richard go on and say what he wuz a minter, both as a visiter, who wuz goin' to remain with us but a short period, and also a relation, and a ex-minister.

My wink said all of this, and more. And my companion wuz affected by it. But like a child a cryin' hard after bein' spanked, he couldn't stop short off all to once.

So he went on, but in fur mellerer axents, and more long-sufferin'er ones:

“Wall, I say there is more talk than there is any need of. I don't believe things are to such a pass in the South. I don't take much stock in this Race Problem anyway. The Government whipped the South and freed the niggers. And there it is, all finished and done with. And everything seems quiet so fur as I can hear on.

“I hain't heard nuthin' about any difficulty to speak on, nor I don't believe Uncle Nate Gowdey has, or Sime Bently. And if there wuz much of anything wrong goin' on, one of us three would have been apt to have hearn on it.

“For we are, some of us, down to the corners about every night, and get all the news there is a stirrin'.

“Of course there is some fightin' everywhere. Uncle Nate hearn of a new fight last night, over to Loontown. We get holt of everything. And I don't believe there is any trouble down South, and if there is, they will get along well enough if they are left alone, if there hain't too much said.”



UNCLE NATE GOWDEY.

Sez John Richard, "I have lived in the South for years, and I know what I am talking about. And I say that you Northern people, and in fact all the nation, are like folks sitting on the outside of a volcano, laughing and talking in your gay indifference, and thinking the whole nation is in safety, when the flames and the lava torrents of destruction are liable to burst out at any time and overwhelm this land in ruin."

And then agin, though I hate to set it down—then agin did my pardner give vent to them dangerous and quarrelsome sentiments

before I could reach him with a wink or any other precautionary measures. That rash man said agin:

“Oh shaw!”

And I see, devoted Christian as John Richard wuz, the words gaulded him almost more than he could endure, and he broke out in almost heated axents, and his keen dark eye a flashin’, and says he:

“I tell you the storm is brewing! I have watched it coming up and spreading over the land, and unless it is averted, destruction awaits this people.”

His tone wuz a very preachin’ one, very, and I felt considerable impressed by it; but Josiah Allen spoke up pert as a peacock, and sez he:

“Why don’t the Southern folks behave themselves, then?”

And sez John Richard:

“Do you blame the Southern white folks exclusively?”

“Yes,” sez Josiah, in them same pert axents; “yes, of course I do.”

“Then that shows how short-sighted you are, how blind!”

“I can see as well as you can!” sez Josiah, all wrought up—“I don’t have to wear goggles.”

Oh, how mortified, how mortified I felt! John Richard did wear blue goggles when he wuz travellin’. But what a breach of manners to twit a visiter of such a thing! Twit ’em of goggles, blue ones too! I felt as if I should sink.

But I didn't know Cousin John Richard Allen. He hadn't give up ease and comfort and the joys of a fireside, for principle's sake, for nuthin'. No personal allusions could touch him. The goggles fell onto him harmlessly, and fell off agin. He didn't notice 'em no more'n if they hadn't been throwed.

And he went on growin' more and more sort o' lifted up and inspired-lookin', and a not mindin' what or who wuz round him. And sez he:

“I tell you again the storm is rising; I hear its mutterings in the distance, and it is coming nearer and nearer all the time.”

Josiah kinder craned his neck and looked out of the winder in a sort of a brisk way. He misunderstood him a purpose, and acted as if John Richard meant a common thunder-storm.

But Cousin John Richard never minded him, bein' took up and intent on what his own mind wuz a lookin' at onbeknown to us—

“I have been amongst this people night and day for years; I have been in the mansions of the rich, the ruins of the beautiful homes ruined by the war, and in the cabins of the poor. I have been in their schools and their churches, and the halls where the law is misadministered—I have been through the Southern land from one end to the other—and I know what I am talking about.

“I went there to try to help the freedmen. I knew these people so lately enslaved were poor and ignorant, and I thought I could help them.

“But I was almost as ignorant as you are of the real state of affairs in the South. But I have been there and seen for myself, and I tell



you, and I tell this nation, that we are on the eve of another war if something is not done to avert it.”

My pardner wuz jest a openin’ his mouth in a derisive remark, but I hitched my chair along and trod on his foot, and onbeknown to me it wuz the foot on which he wuz raisin’ a large corn, and his derisive remark wuz changed to a low groan, and Cousin John Richard went on onhended.

“I went South with good motives, God knows. I knew this newly enfranchised race was sorely in want of knowledge, Christian knowledge most of all.

“I thought, as so many others do, that Christianity and education would solve this problem. I never stopped to think that the white race, of whose cruelty the negroes complained, had enjoyed the benefits of Christianity for hundreds of years, and those whose minds were enriched by choicest culture had hearts encased in bitterest prejudices, and it was from the efforts of their avarice and selfishness that I was trying to rescue the freedmen. We accomplished much, but I expected, as so many others have, choicer Christian fruits to spring from this barren soil, that has grown in the rich garden cultivated for centuries.

“Education has done and will do much—Christianity more; but neither can sound a soundless deep, nor turn black night into day.

“But I never thought of this. I worked hard and meant well, Heaven knows. I thought at first I could do marvellous things; later, when many failures had made me more humble, I thought if I could help only one soul my labor would not be in vain. For who knows,” sez John Richard dreamily, “who knows the tremendous train of influences one sets in motion when he is under God

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