Samantha in Europe

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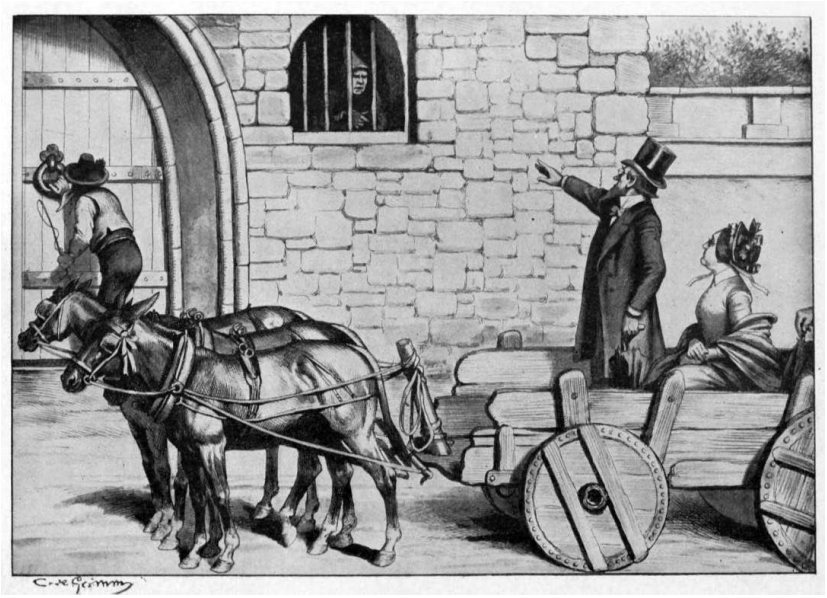

“ He riz right up and shook his fist at the man with the nightcap.” (See page 641.)

Samantha in Europe

by

Josiah Allen's Wife

(Marietta Holley)

Illustrated by C. DeGrimm

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Dedication.

TO THE WEARY TRAVELLER WHO YEARNS TO SEE
UNDER STRANGE SKIES THE LIGHT OF THE
OLD HOME FIRE,
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED BY

SAMANTHA AND JOSIAH.

PREFACE.

Sez Josiah, as he see me writin' this preface:

"Seems to me, Samantha, you've writ enough prefaces."

(He wanted me to start the supper; but, good land! it wuzn't only half past five, and I had a spring chicken all ready to fry, and my cream biscuit wuz all ready for the oven, on the kitchen table.)

Sez he, "It seems to me you've writ enough on em."

And I sez, "Wall, Josiah, I'd hate to sadden the world by sayin' I wouldn't write any more."

And he sez, "How do you know it would sadden the world—how do you know it would?" And he continued: "Samantha, I hain't wanted to dampen you, but I have always considered your writin's weak; naterally they would be, bein' writ by a woman; and," sez he, as he looked longin'ly towards the buttery door and the plump chicken, "a woman's spear lays in a different direction."

And I sez, "I thought I'd write some of our adventures in our trip abroad—that happy time," sez I, lookin' inquirin'ly at him.

"Happy time!" sez he, a-kinder 'nashin' his teeth—"happy! gracious Heavens! Do you want to bring up my sufferin's agin, when I jest lived through 'em?"

"Wall," sez I, a-gittin' up and approachin' the buttery, and takin' down the tea-kettle and fryin'-pan and coffee-pot, "I have writ other things in the book that I am more interested in myself."

He sot kinder still and demute as I put the chicken on to fry in butter, and put the cream biscuit in the oven, and poured the bilein' water on the fragrant coffee; his mean seemed to grow softer, and he sez:

"Mebby I wuz too hash a-sayin' what I did about your writin's, Samantha; I guess you write as well as you know how to; I guess you *mean* well;" and as he see me a-spreadin' the snowy table-cloth on the little round table, and a-puttin' on some cream cheese and some peach sass, he sez further:

"Nobody is to blame for what they don't know, Samantha."

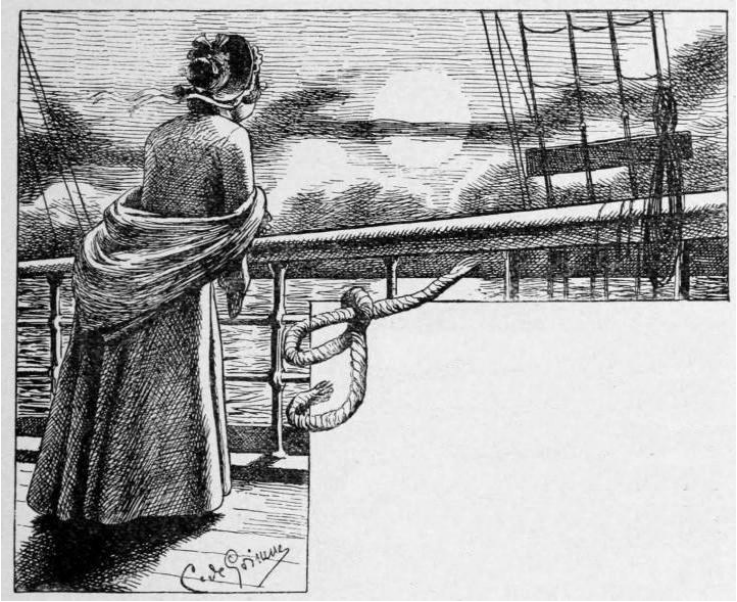
I looked down affectionately and pityin'ly on his old bald head and then further off—way off into mysterious spaces no mortal feet has ever trod, and I sez:

"That is so, Josiah."

SAMANTHA IN EUROPE.

CHAPTER I.

TRAINS OF RETROSPECTION.



Twilight on the broad ocean! Smooth, wild waste of blue-gray waters stretchin' out as fur as the eye could reach on every side.

In the east a silvery moon hangin' low and a shinin' path leadin' up to it. In the west Mars a-dazzlin' bright over a pale pink sky, with streaks of yeller and crimson a-layin' stretched acrost it, like bars put up by angel hands a-fencin' in their world from ourn.

Now in a sunset in Jonesville it might seem as if you could put on your sun-bunnet and stride off over hills and valleys and at las' reach the Sunset Land, and peek over the bars and ketch a glimpse of what wuz beyend.

It would seem amongst the possibles.

But here—oh! how fur-off, illimitable, unaproachable, duz that fur-off glory look!

And Mars seemed to wink that red eye of hisen at me mockin'ly as I strained my eyes over the long watery plain, as if to say—"The time has been when you wuz free to roam round, a-walkin' off afoot; you may have gloated over me in your free thoughts and said—

"You are fixed and sot up there, while I am free to soar and sail. Now, haughty female mortal, your wings are clipped—the time has come when your walkin' afoot and roamin' round is stopped."

To think that I myself, Josiah Allen's Wife, should find myself on the Atlantic a-hangin' onto the gunwale of the ship with one hand, and a-lookin' off over the endless waters below and all round me, and a-thinkin' if I should trust myself to step out onto its heavey, treacherous surface where should I go to, and when, and why! I, Samantha, who had ever been ust to slippin' on my sun-bunnet and runnin' into Miss Bobbettses, or out into the garden, or out to the hen-house for eggs, or down into the orchard, or the wood paster for recreation or cowslips.

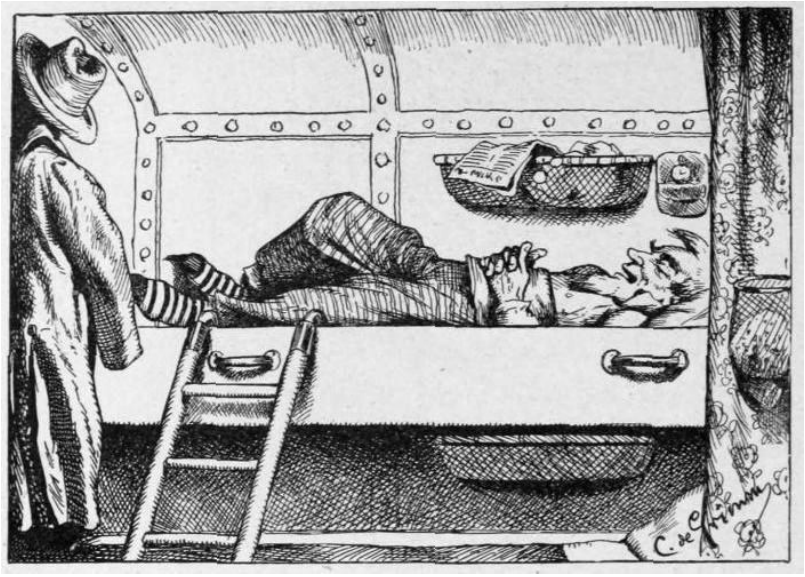
To think that I wuz thus caged up as it were, my restless wings (speakin' in metafor) folded in such clost quarters, with no chance (to foller up the metafor) of floppin' 'em to any extent.

Oh! where wuz I? The thought wuz full of or. Why wuz I? This thought brung on trains of retrospection.

As I sot in my contracted corner of the aft fore-castle deck, and Night wuz lettin' down, gradual, her starry mantilly over me and the seen, as erst it did over me as I sot in the sweet, restful door-yard at Jonesville. (Dear seen, shall I ever see thee agin?)

I will rehearse the facts that led to my takin' this onpresidented step.

My pardner is asleep in his narrer bunk, or ruther on one of the shelves in our cell, that are cushioned, and on which our two forms nightly repose.



ASLEEP IN HIS NARRER BUNK.

He is at rest. The waves are asleep, or pretty nigh asleep, the night winds are hushed, and all Nater seems to draw in her breath and wait for me as I tell the tale.

I will begin, as most fashionable novelists do, with a verse of poetry——

"Backward, turn backward (as fur as Jonesville), Oh Time, in thy flight—
Make me (a trusty, short-winded, female historian) jest for to-night."

It wuz now goin' on three years sence Uncle Philander Smith's son, Philander Martin, named after his Pa and his Uncle Martin, writ a line to me announcin' his advent into Jonesville. And in speakin' of Philander I shall have to go back, kinder sideways, some distance into the past to describe him.

Yes, I will have to lead the horse fur back to hitch it on properly to the wagon of my history, or mebby it would be more proper, under the circumstances, to say how fur I must row my little personal life-boat back to hitch it onto the great steamer of my statement, in order that there shall be direct smooth sailin' and no meanderin'.

Wall, with the first paddle of my verbal row-boat, I would state—

(And into how many little still side coves and seemin'ly wind-locked ways my little life-boat must sail on her way back to be jined to the great steamer, and how I must stay in 'em for some time! It can't be helped.)

Yes, it must have been pretty nigh three years ago that we had our first letter from P. Martyn Smythe.

He is my second cousin on my own side. And he sot out from Spoonville (a neighborin' hamlet) years ago with lots of ambition and pluck and energy, and about one dollar and seventy-five cents in money.

Uncle Philander, his father, had a big family, and died leavin' him nothin' but his good example and some old spectacles and a cane.

He wuz brung up by his Uncle Martin, a good-natered creeter, but onfaculized and shiftless.

Young Martin never loved to be hampered, and after he got old enough to help his uncle, he didn't want to be hampered with him, so he packed up his little knapsack and sot out to seek his fortune, and he prospered beyend any tellin', bought some mines, and railroads, and things, and at last come back East and settled down in a neighborin' city, and then got rid of several things that he found hamperin' to him. Amongst 'em wuz his old name—now he calls it "Smythe."

Yes, he got rid of the good, reliable old Smith name, that has stood by so many human bein's even unto the end. And he got rid, too, of his conscience, the biggest heft of it, and his poor relations.

For why, indeed, should a Bill or a Tom Smith claim relationship with a P. Martyn Smythe?

Why, indeed! He got rid of 'em all in a heap, as it were, a-ignorin' "the hull kit and bilein' of 'em," as Aunt Debby said.

"Never seen hide nor hair of any of 'em, from one year's end to the other," sez Aunt Debby.

As to his conscience, he got rid of that, I spoze, kinder gradual, a little at a time, till to all human appearance he hadn't a speck left, of which more anon.

But there wuz a little of it left, enough to leven his hull nater and raise it up, some like hop yeast, only stronger and more spiritual (as will also be seen anon).

Wall, he never seemed to know where his cousin, she that wuz Samantha Smith, lived, and his neck seemed to be made in that way—kinder held up by his stiff white collar mebby—that it held his head up firm and immovable, so's he didn't see me nor my Josiah when he'd meet him once in a great while at some quarterly meetin' or conferences and sech.

I guess that neck of hisen carried him so straight that he couldn't seem to turn it towards the old Smith pew at all.

And then he wuz dretful near-sighted, too; his eyes wuz affected dretful curous.

Uncle Mart Smith, the one P. Martin wuz named after, atted him about it, for he wuz his own uncle, and dretful shiftless and poor, but a Christian as fur as he could be with his nateral laziness on him.

As I say, he partly brung Martin up. A good-natered creeter he wuz. And one day he walked right up and atted P. Martyn Smythe as to why he never could see him.

And P. Martyn sed that it wuz his eyesight; sez he, "I'm dretful near-sighted."

It made it all right with Uncle Martin, but his wife, Aunt Debby, she sed, “Why can he see bishops and elders so plain?”

“Wall,” sez Uncle Mart, “it is a curous complaint.” And she sez—

“’Tain’t curous a mite; it’s as nateral as ingratitude, and as old as Pharo.”

And she and Uncle Mart had some words about it.

Wall, his eyesight seemed to grow worse and worse so fur as old friends and relations wuz concerned, till all of a sudden—it wuz after my third book had shook the world, or I spoze it did; it kinder jarred it anyway, I guess—wall, what should that man, P. Martyn, do, but write to me and invite me to the big city where he lived.

Sez he, “Relations ort to cling closter to each other;” sez he, “Come and stay a week.”

I answered his note, cool but friendly.

And then he writ agin, and asked me to come and stay a month. Agin my answer wuz Christian, but about as cool as well water.

And then he writ agin and asked me to come and stay a year with ’em. And he would be glad, he said, he and his two motherless children, if I would come and live with ’em always.

This allusion to the motherless melted me down some, and my reply wuz, I spoze, about the temperture of milk jest from the cow.

But I said that Duty and Josiah binded me to my home and Jonesville.

Wall, the next summer what should P. Martyn do but to write to me that he and Alice and Adrian, his two children, wuz a-comin' to Jonesville, and would we take 'em in for a week? He thought his children needed fresh air and a little cossetin'.

Wall, to me, Josiah Allen's wife, who has brung up almost numberless lambs and chickens by hand as cossets, this allusion to "cossetin'" melted me so and warmed up my nater, that my reply wuz about the temperture of skim milk het for the calves.

So they come.

And indeed I said then what I say now, and I'll defy anybody to dispute me, that two prettier, winnin'er creeters never lived than them two children.

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