

SAMANTHA
ON
CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

BY
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FOR FIVE DAYS HE WUZ SHET UP IN HIS ROOM AND KEP' ON BREAD AND WATER.

SAMANTHA ON CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Jack has got a middlin' round face, with eyes of dark blue. A sort of mornin' glory blue, and at times they are big, that is when he is wonderin' over sunthin', or has found out sunthin'. And at times they will be sort o' half shet up, like mornin' glories when the sun is too hot. Then is the time when he has been wilted by Hamen and his wife. The fresh, vigorous desire for knowledge born in him, unbeknown to himself, jest as the freshness of the mornin' glories wuz born in them, withered and too hardly sot down on by the searchin' rays of misapprehension, ridicule, etc., etc.

When he wuz a little bit of a fellow he would always shet his eyes when he wuz scolded, for half an hour at a time, and walk round with 'em shet. It seemed as if he wuz some disgusted with the world, and wanted to lose sight on't for a spell. Now he about half shets 'em when he is mortified.

His hair is curly at the ends, it is brown, some like the deep shinin' brown you have seen in trout brooks, and where the curls kinder crinkle up a streak of gold runs through 'em. His forehead is broad and pretty middlin' white, and high enough, plenty high enough, and the hair hangs down in little short curls over it the most of the time.

Tamer Ann, that's his Ma, don't like it, she wants it brushed back tight to show his intellect, and nags at Jack because he don't keep it back. Sez she in a very cross tone:

"Folks will think you hain't got any intellect at all if they see your hair all over your forward."

And I sez, "I wouldn't worry, Tamer Ann, if the intellect is there it will work out, hair or no hair, and if it hain't there no amount of plasterin' the hair back will show it off—I've seen it tried." Sez I in a milder tone, seein' she looked kinder mad:

"I've seen hair brushed back straight from the forward so's to give a free pass to the intellect, and left long on the neck to entice it out, but it wouldn't appear, for the reason it wuzn't there. Don't you worry about Jack, Tamer Ann, you'll find his intellect will push its way through them curls—I hain't a mite afraid on't.

"And at the same time, Jack," sez I, for Duty is my companion and I foller her blindly, "you must try to mind your Ma and keep the curls back."

Jack laughed and run his hand through 'em and put 'em back. Jack always minds me, or, that is, most always.

Now I don't always mind the Higher Teacher, I don't always set the stitches right in the great sampler that is hung up before me from day to day. It is a true remark that wuz once made at a conference meetin' that "We often leave ondone the things that ort to be done, and do the things that we hadn't ort." Then why should I be hard on Jack when occasionally, very occasionally, mind you, he don't do exactly as he ort, or duz as he ortn't.

You see our Heavenly Father tells us what to do, He has told us once for all in the divine book, and then He wrops himself in the Everlastin' Silence and leaves us to our own convictions, our own sense of duty to Him. He makes us afraid to disobey Him. His love constrains us, our sense of duty holds us (a good deal of the time) and we try (some of the time) to do right for the Right's sake, and because of the completeness and constancy of the love and tender pity broodin' over us.

Now, I have often wondered what we would do if our Heavenly Father nagged at us as some parents do at their children, if every time we make a miss-step, or a mistake, owin' to the blindness of our ignorance, or our waywardness, if He kep' naggin' at us, and bringin' us up short, and threatenin' us with punishment, and twitched us about and pulled our ears, and sot us down in corners, and shet us up in dark closets, and sent us to bed without our suppers, and told us to, "Shet up instantly!" and etcetery. I wondered how long we would keep our love and reverence for Him.

Now, a father and mother are to their children the controlling power, the visible Deity of their lives. They stand in the High Place in their souls. Let 'em tremble and quail if they don't hold that high place reverently, thoughtfully, prayerfully. The making or the marring of a life, a endless, immortal life, is in their hands, let 'em tremble at the thought.

Jack's mouth is a good natered one more'n half the time, most all the time, when he is down on the farm with Josiah and me (he loves to be there). It is quite a big mouth, but none too big, not at all, with red lips, the upper one kinder short, and the ends curl up in a dretful sort of a laughin', roguish way. But

them curls can droop right down and the lips quiver like a baby's—I've seen 'em. That is when he is nagged at. Tamer Ann nags at Jack more'n half the time.

Jack loves his mother, and that is why the naggin's reach right through the little blue jacket and touches his heart. And the tremblin' onhappiness of the heart makes the blue eyes shet about half up in a forlorn way, and the red lips quiver. I've seen 'em. Why, good land! Jack hain't much more than a baby anyway, only about six and a half years old. He's a stout little feller, and most always wears a dark blue cloth suit with a little sailor hat sot kinder back on his curls if he puts it on himself. And I don't want to see a better lookin' boy than Jack is. His father is my cousin on my own side.

Hamen Archibald Smith, old Elder Archibald Smith's boy. Hamen is well off, he owns a big farm and a shingle mill up in Zoar, about seven miles from Jonesville on the old State Road. Hamen's wife is a female he got acquainted with while he wuz away to school (Hamen is high learnt). His father sent him away for upwards of seven months to a high school, and then he got acquainted with Tamer Ann Bodley and married her. She wuz from a high family, she herself is over six feet high and spindlin' in figger. She wuz to school to the same place. She had been there over nine weeks when Hamen got acquainted with her.

Their love wuz sudden and voyalent, and they married at the expiration of the term and left school and sot up housekeepin', both of 'em bein' high learnt, and havin' traveled. Why, they went over forty milds on their weddin' tower. And the high

school where they got acquainted wuz upwards of thirty milds from Zoar.

Havin' had all these advantages and bein' forehanded, they naterally put on some airs, and wuz looked up to. They did make a handsome, high headed couple, I'll say that for 'em. Hamen wuz about a inch or a inch and a half taller than she wuz.

Well, how time duz run along to be sure. It don't seem like a year hardly sence we got the invitation to the weddin' party Uncle Archibald gin to the bride and groom at the old Smith house out to Piller Pint. And now Hamen's oldest child, Anna, is goin' on nineteen years old. How time duz pass away! Why, I declare for't, if it wuzn't for these great tall livin' mildstuns springin' up all along life's journey we could hardly believe our old family Bibles, and would deny our ages.

But these livin' mildstuns can't be gone by, they stand up straight and tall, and we have to stop and read 'em, and then we see for ourselves how fur we have come on the journey and how fast we are approachin' the great Stoppin' Place for the Night. Anna Smith is a good lookin' mildstun. She is plump and fresh and sweet lookin'. I like Anna and Anna likes me. Her brother, next younger than herself, is named Cicero. Her Ma named him after some big man, old Captain Cicero, it seems to me it wuz, anyway he wuz a big talker and died some time ago.

Cicero Smith is now about fifteen years old, he is dull complected, kinder frosty and onwholesome lookin', with great big round eyes, kinder pale and wild lookin', some like gooseberries. His hair is thin and strings down the side of his

face like little wisps of pale yeller straw, only of course some finer. His hands always felt kinder clammy, and he takes after his Ma in figger, tall and scraggly and spindlin'.

I never took to him at all nor he to me, he always wuz a indifferent actin' chap even in his cradle. He'd turn over in his cradle when he wuz a infant and look at the rungs in the back side on't when I would try to git his attention, and I hain't never been able to git it sence. Jest as quick as he wuz old enough to read he jest took to dime novels. His mother encouraged it, she said it nourished a love for readin', and would make him literary. He and his mother, I spoze, have read more'n twenty cords of 'em if they wuz corded up and measured with a yard stick, and most every one on 'em yeller covered and harrowin'.

I have told Tamer Ann that they wuzn't good for her or Cicero to devour so much. But good land! I couldn't move her a inch. She kep' on readin' 'em and givin' 'em to him to read, and the more blood curdliner they wuz the more they doted on 'em. Why, I should have thought their blood would have turned to ice in their veins, and their skin got thick as a elephant's hide with goose pimples caused by the horrow of 'em; why, their names wuz enough to skair anybody to death, let alone readin' 'em. Anna never took to 'em, she seemed to take after the Smiths more, so I think, and Jack of course hain't old enough, and I don't believe he'll ever love 'em anyway.

Hamen's brother lived at their house when Jack wuz born, and he's made it his home with 'em ever sence. His name is John Zebulen Smith, named after old Grandpa Smith.

And as he wuz always called John, why, they called little John Jack, when he wuz a baby, to keep him from gittin' mixed up with his uncle and bein' took for him, so he has always gone by the name of Jack. And Jack from the first on't has been a favorite of mine, a great favorite. And I always felt so safe with him; I knew he wouldn't die from bein' too good, as so many little Sabbath school heroes do.

And yet he wuz always a noble child, truthful as the day wuz long. He would scorn to tell a lie, he wuz too proud to. If he had done anything he would own up to it, most every time he would. And he had naterally a religious mind, I believed, though sometimes Josiah would laugh the idee to scorn when Jack would git into one of his scrapes. He wuz kinder lazy some of the time, and opposition, onreasonable opposition, made him mad, and he would contend to the last minute when he got to goin'. And he had been fooled by Hamenses folks so much that he had got into the habit of keepin' still and studyin' out things for himself. The fools! they would tell him such stories, lies, a purpose to keep him wonderin' and to hear him talk, that he had got sort o' embittered and tried to rely on himself to find out strange things. It wuz pitiful as anything I ever see, and sometimes I thought pitifuler.

Now, spozin' he wanted to find out some particular thing so dretfully it seemed as if he couldn't live a minute without knowin' about it, he would ask Hamen and Hamen would tell him the greatest story you ever hearn, and Jack would listen to it at first, and talk about it, curous, I'll admit, but not curous at all if it wuz true.

And then Hamen and his brother would laugh like two idiots to see Jack's wonderin' looks, and shamed and mortified and everything. And then he would go to Tamer Ann, but Tamer would most likely have some new dime novel that she'd just commenced, and would be so wropped up in the joys and sorrows of the heroine, and would be cryin' over her lots of times, so she couldn't see Jack through her tears, and she would have to wipe her eyes when Jack disturbed her, and tell him all choked down by her emotions to run away, that his Ma wuz too busy to answer him, or else she would have some new distemper that day, and tell Jack to run away for his noise wuz killin' her.

Well, what wuz the poor little feller to do? Everything wuz new to him, he had so many things that he wanted to find out, what could he do? Wall, there wuz only one thing he could do, and that wuz to try to find 'em out for himself. Tamer Ann bein' a good woman at the bottom of her heart (but the goodness bein' all covered up with nonsense, dime novels, fancy distempers, etc.), she sent Jack to Sunday school.

And everything there wuz new to him. Tamer Ann had, I spoze, been willin', but had never had the time to teach Jack the Bible. Havin' so many heroines, pirates, etc., to drive along in front of her mind, she naterally hadn't any room for the apostles and prophets. The procession of lovely bein's and hoary villains wuz big, and the thoroughfare small (Tamer's mind I mean). And when a woman is huntin' round for new fancy distempers, what time has she to tell a child about the Babe of Bethlehem?

No, Jack didn't know a thing about the Bible, and the female Sunday school teacher he went to wuz a Born Baptist, she

wuzn't as you may say a woman, a female citizen, or human bein', she wuz jest Baptist, plain Baptist.

And so the food poor little Jack had put before him at that Sabbath school wuz hard, sound food. Good doctrine, but tough, fearful tough. Well, Jack accepted it jest as he did every new thing, and then, as his first move always wuz, he went to investigatin' it himself.

She told him, with no explanation, that if any one prayed in faith their prayers would be answered. It wuz a new idee to Jack, and he wuz agitated over it. He asked his father that night if it wuz so, and told Hamen about the Lamb appearin' to Abraham, and sez Jack:

"If I had faith would my prayers be answered?"

"Yes," sez Hamen, "if you should pray to have it rain down candy, down it would come."

Sez Jack, "Would the lamb appear?" That seemed to be uppermost in his mind.

"Yes," sez Hamen, "the lamb would appear, and mebbly a hull drove of 'em."

And then Hamen looked at John and winked, and they both snickered, the fools! Well, Jack see that they wuz makin' fun of him, and he kinder meached away with his mornin' glory blue eyes most shot up. Poor little creeter! little, lonesome, abused creeter!

And when he got over his mortification a little he resolved to investigate for himself. So he went out in the kitchen and built

up a fire in the stove, took off all the griddles, and piled on the wood as nigh as Abraham did as he could in a cook stove, accordin' to a picter the Born Baptist had shown him. He got a good hot fire goin', and then he took a book, a costly book that Hamen had gin to Jack, thinkin' that though it wuz pretty old for him now, he would grow up to it. It wuz full of costly engravin's, and wuz the thing that Jack loved best of all his possessions.

So he laid that book on the hot griddles, and then knelt down and prayed for God not to burn it up. He lifted his voice loud in prayer. Tamer Ann, who heard him, thought that he wuz preachin', as he often did.

So she didn't interfere, and she wuz at that very minute mistrustin' she had got a new distemper. She had bumped her knee gittin' down to look under the bed after a dime novel, "The Wild Princess of the Enchanted Forest," and wuz some in hopes that she had got the sinevetus. But pretty soon she smelt a smudge, and she run out and there wuz the valuable book all burnt and shriveled up, and poor little Jack kneelin' there with the tears runnin' down his cheeks in copious astorents and he a moanin' to himself, and groanin' out:

"Oh, the Lord might a done it if He had wanted to!" and "Oh, the lamb didn't come!" and "Oh, He didn't save my book!" And so on and so on.

Well, Tamer Ann didn't take the poor little mourner and seeker after truth to her heart and wipe away his tears and tell him all about it, all she could tell, all any of us can tell, which is little enough, Heaven knows. No, she jest whipped him severely. And

when he tried to tell her what he did it for, how the teacher had told him that it wuz so, she told him to stop instantly and to not say another word to her about it, but to go to bed without his supper for his naughtiness. And poor little Jack had to meach off to bed and lay there with his little mind workin' on and workin' on, his hungry stomach makin' his brain all the more active.

Tamer Ann might whip his tongue still, but she couldn't stop his mind from workin'. No, the one that set that machinery to goin' wuz the only one who could stop it. As he had told his Ma once, "You can make me keep my tongue still, but you can't stop my thinker." No, Tamer Ann couldn't whip that still.

Well, the poor little creeter lay and pondered over what could have caused the failure of his plans. And he finally made up his mind that his sacrifice wuzn't costly enough.

He loved the book the best of anything he owned, but the B. B. had told him that he must offer up what he loved best of anything in the world. And he remembered, too, in the story of Abraham it wuz a livin' sacrifice. Why hadn't he thought of it? Why, it must be his mother, of course. For, by that mystery of love born in the deep silence and perils of maternity, Jack loved his mother the best of all, and Tamer loved him (in her way).

Well, from that time Tamer Ann wuz doomed in Jack's eyes, set apart as a costly oblation to be offered up on the altar of sacrifice, and he begun to watch her so mysterious like, and kinder prowl round her in such a strange way that they all noticed it. He went to Sabbath school agin in the meantime, and wuz agin fed on the sound, hard food that would almost have

cracked the teeth of a adult, but which poor little Jack wuz expected to chew on and digest (poor little creeter!)

And agin the subject wuz Faith, and agin the story of Abraham wuz brung up, and agin they wuz admonished and adjured to sacrifice what they loved the best of all, if they would be rewarded, and see the lamb of sacrifice, snow white and glorious, appear at their right hand.

Jack's eyes grew bigger and bigger, and his plans seemed nearer fulfilment. He wanted to do right and he wanted the lamb. He thought he could make a pen for it back of the woodshed. But, above all, the fervor of a martyr had been waked up in his ardent young soul. He felt lifted up and inspired. He would obey the Lord. He would do his duty regardless of his own feelings. He would sacrifice his best beloved.

That evenin' Tamer wuz settin' peaceful readin' "Lost Eudora of the Gulch; or, The Becalmed Elephant," when she heard a movement behind her and she looked round and there Jack wuz applyin' a match to a string that wuz tied round her belt and wuz trailin' along the carpet. He wuz jest as pale as death and wuz cryin', but looked resolved. He wuz settin' fire to his mother, sacrificin' his best beloved, according to the commandment of the B. B.

Well, Jack looked so woe-be-gone and agitated, and the string looped into the belt and layin' down on the floor like a train laid to a gunpowder plot looked so curous, that Jack wuz questioned, and it all came out. Well, I spoze that there never wuz a child whipped harder than that child wuz. He bore the

marks for days and days. Tamer has got a dretful temper, everybody knows that, I hain't tellin' any news.

And for five days he wuz shet up in his room and kep' on bread and water, and not one word said to him in all that time of comfort and sympathy or enlightenment. But they whipped the idee of sacrifice entirely out of him, and faith. For the next time the subject of faith come up in the Sunday school, and the B. B. wuz holdin' forth all the beauties of faith, and the sureness of its rewards, Jack's little voice piped out:

“There hain't a word of truth in it; for my folks say so, and I know that there hain't, for I've tried it for myself.”

Oh, the poor little creeter! not knowin' one word of the divine faith of which the story he heard wuz the symbol. Of how when the dearest and best is offered up on the altar of a divine renunciation, God sends His peace and His rest into our lives like snow white lambs, and all sacrifices seem easy for His sake who gave us His best. Poor little Jack! not a word of this, not a word of common sense even, nothin' but whippin's and tellin's to “shet up instantly!”

Poor little creeter!

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