

THE  
HOUSE-TOP  
SAINT.



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HOUSE-TOP SAINT.

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“**Y**ES, yes, sonny, I’s mighty fo’-handed, and no ways like poo’ white trash, nor yet like any of dese on-sanctified col’d folks dat grab deir liberty like a dog grabs a bone—no thanks to nobody!”

Thus the sable queenly Sibyl McIvor ended a long boast of her prosperity since she had become 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 laid 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 beardless youth in the eye and exclaimed with a sarcastic smile, “ *You* hope I’m a Christian, do you ? Why, sonny, I was a respectable sort of a Christian afore your mammy was born, I reckons ! But for dese last twenty-five years I’s e done been a mighty powerful one—one o’ de kind dat makes Satan shake in his hoofs—is one of the 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 even heerd tell on ’em, up your way. Dey’s mighty scarce any whar ; but de Lor’s got one on ’em, to any rate, in dis place and on dis plantation ! ” replied Sibyl, triumphantly.

“ And that is you ? ”

“ Yes, sonny, dat is *me* ! ”

“ Then tell me what do you mean by being a house-top saint ? ”

“ Well, I mean dat I’s been t’rough all de stories o’ my Father’s house on arth, from the celler up ; and now I’s fairly on de ruff—yes on, de very ridge pole ; and dare I sits and sings and shouts and sees heaven—like you never see it t’rough de clouds down yere.”

“ How do you get there auntie ? ”

“ How does you get from de celler to

de parlor, and from de parlor to de chamber, and from de chamber to de ruff? Why, de builder has put sta'rs 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; yet you say house-top saints are very scarce?"

"Sartin, sonny. Star's don't get people up, 'less dey mounts 'em. If dere was a million o' sta'rs leadin' up to glory, it would'nt help them dat sits down at de bottom and howls and mourns 'bout how helpless dey is! Brudder Adam, dere, dat's a blackin' of your boots, he's de husban' o' *my* bussum, and yet he's nothin' but only a poor, down-celler 'sciple, sittin' in de dark, and whinin' and lamentin' 'cause he ain't up stairs! I says

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?

“ ‘Oh,’ says he, Sibby, I's too onworthy; I dosent desurve 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 old missus' death? Miss Alice she was poor as unfeathered chicken; but did she go down celler and sit 'mong de po'k barr'ls and de trash 'cause she was poor and wasn't worthy to live up sta'rs? Not she! She tuk her place to de head o' de table, and w'ar all de lacery 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 McIvor's chil'n;

but I's de Col'n's b'loved wife and I stan's for de mother of his chil'n as she had a right to say ! And de Col'n love her all de moie for her not bein' a fool and settin' down cellar 'mong de po'k barr'ls !

“ Dere sonny, dat's de way I talk to Brudder Adams ! But so fur it haint fotched him up ! De poor deluded cretur' thinks he's humble, when he's only low-minded and grovelling like ! It's unworthy of a blood-bought soul for to stick to de cold, dark cellar, when he mought live in de light and warmf, up on de house-top ! ”

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

“ Mo' fools you den ! ” cried Sibyl. “ De house-top is dere, and de sta'rs is



dere, and de grand glorious Master is dere, up 'bove all, callin' to you day and night, 'Frien', come up higher!' He reaches down His shinin' han' and offers for to draw you up; but you shake your head and pulls back and says, 'No, no, Lord; I isn't nothing.' 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 and parlour and Chamber Christians!'

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

"Parlor Christians honey? Why dems is de ones dat gets barly out o' de cellar and goes straitway and forgets what kind o' creturs dey was down dere! Dey grow proud and dresses up fine, like de wor'ls folks, and dances, and sings worldly trash o' songs, and has only just 'ligion

enough to make a show wid. Our ole missus, she used to train 'mong her col'd folks wuss den ole King Furio, did 'mong de 'Gyptians. But bless you, de minute de parson or any other good brudder or sister come along, how she did tune up her harp ! She was mighty 'ligious in the parlor but she left her 'ligion dere when she went out.

“ I do think missus got to heaven wid all her infarmities. But she didn't get very high up till de bride-groom come and call for her ! Den she said me, one dead-o'-night, ‘ Oh Sibby,’ says she—she held tight on to my han’;—‘ Oh, Sibby, it you could only go along o' me, and I could keep hold o' your garments, I'd have hope o' getting through de shinin' gate your clothes and your face and your hands shines 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 to you and every other poor sinner dat will come near enough to cotch 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 su'stition and igno'ance. But now, Oh Sibby, I'd like to touch de hem o' your garment, and wipe de dust off your shoes, if I could on'ly ketch a glimpse o' Christ.’

“ Do you b'lieve dat you's a sinner, missus ? says I.

“ ‘ Yes the chief of o' sinners ; ’ says she with a groan.

“ Do you b'lieve dat Christ died for sinners, and is able to carry out His plan ? says I.

“ ‘ Yes says she.

“ Well then says I ; if you’s sinner ’nough, and Christ is Saviour ’nough, what’s to hender your being’ saved ? Just you quit lookin’ at yourself, and look to Him.

“ Den she kotch sight o’ de cross and she forgot herself ; and her face light up like an angel’s ; and she was a new missus from dat yar hour till she went up. She died a singin’,

“ ‘ In my han’ no price I bring,  
Simple to dy cross I cling.’

“ But she mought a sung all de way along, if she hadn’t forgot de hoomiliation o’ de cellar, and bused de privileges o’ de parlor. Parlors is fine things ; but dey ain’t made for folks to spen’ deir whole time in.”

“What’s a chamber saint, auntie ?” asked the young man.

Chamber saints is dem dat’s ’scaped 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 glad o’ rest. Dey says, ‘Well, we’s got ’long mighty well, and can now see de way clar up to glory.’ And sometimes dey forgets dat dey’s on’y half way up and thinks dey’s come off conqueror a’ready. So dey’s very apt to lie down wid deir hands folded, thinkin’ dat Satan isn’t nowhar, now ! 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 no help from dem—not for one while ! De chamber is a sort o’ half-way house made for

rest and comfort ; but some turns it into a roostin' place ! You know Brudder Bunyan sonny ?”

“ No”

“ What never heerd tell o' John Bunyan ? ”

“ Oh yes.”

“ I thought you couldn't all be so ignorent 'bout 'ligion up in Boston as dat ! Well you know he wrote 'bout a brudder dat got asleep and loss his roll, and dat's what's de matter wid heaps o' Christians in de world.' Dey falls asleep and loses deir hope.”

“ And do you keep in this joyful and and wakeful frame all de time, auntie ?” asked the young learner.

“ I does honey by the help of the Lord, and a contin'l watch, I keep the head ob de ole sarpint mashed under my heel,

pretty gineral. Why, sometimes, when he rises up and thrusts his fangs out, I has such power gin me to stop on him dat I can hear his bones crack—mostly! I tell you, honey, he don't like me and he's most gin me up for los'."

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

"Heaps o' ways," she replied. "Sometimes I get up in the mornin', and I sees work enough for two woman ahead o' me. Maybe my head done ache and my narves done rampant; and I hears a voice sayin' in my ear, 'Come or go what likes, Sibby, dat ar work is got to be done! You's sick and tired a'ready! Your lot's mighty hard one, sister Sibby'—Satan often has de imperdence 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 look at dat ar 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 the words o' Scriptor, 'Clar out and git ahind my back, Satan !' Dat ar pile o' shirts ain't high enough to hide Him dat is my strength ! And sometimes I whiske de shirts up and rolls 'em into a bundle, and heaves 'em back into de clothes bask't and says to 'em, 'You lay dar till to-morrow, will you ? I ain't no slave to work, nor to Satan ! for I can 'ford to wait, and sing hime to cher my sperits, if I like.' And den Satan drops his tail and slinks off, most ginerall. and



I goes 'bout my work a singin' :

“ ‘ My Master bruise de sarpint’s head,  
And bind him wid a chain ,  
Come, brudders, hololujah shout,  
Wid all your might and main !  
Hololujah ! ’ ”

“ Does Satan always assail you through your work ? ” asked the young stranger.

“ No, bless you, honey ; sometimes he 'tacks me through my stummick ; and dat's de way he 'tacks rich and grand folks most gineral. If I eat too hearty o' fat bacon and corn cake in times gone, I used to get low in 'ligion, and my hope failed, and I den was such a fool I thought my Christ had forgotten to be gracious to me ! Satan makes great weepens out o' bacon ! But I know better

now, and I keep my body under, like Brudder Paul ; and nothin' has power to separate me from Him I loves. I's too had sorrows enough to break down a dozen hearts dat had no Jesus to shar' 'em wid, but every one on 'em has only fotched me nearer to Him ! Some folks would like to shirk all trouble on dair way to glory, and swim into de shinin' harbor through a sea o' honny ! But sonny, dere's crosses to bar, and I ain't mean enough to want my blessed Jesus to bar 'em all alone. It's my glory dat I can take hold o' one end o' de cross and help Him up the hill wid de load o' poor brussed 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 o' my articles o' faith never to keep him waitin' beyond twelve o'clock when he's hungry and tired, for dat allus gi'se Satan fresh 'vantage over him. Come up to my palace, some day, and we'll have more talk about de way to glory."



