

SONNY'S CHRISTENIN'

YAS, sir, wife an' me, we 've turned 'Piscopals—all on account o' Sonny. He seemed to perfer that religion, an' of co'se we would n't have the family divided, so we 're a-goin' to be ez good 'Piscopals ez we can.

I reckon it 'll come a little bit awkward at first. Seem like I never will git so thet I can sass back in church 'thout feelin' sort o' impident—but I reckon I 'll chirp up an' come to it, in time.

I never was much of a hand to sound the amens, even in our own Methodist meetin's.

Sir? How old is he? Oh, Sonny's purty nigh six—but he showed a p'refence for the 'Piscopal Church long fo' he could talk.

When he was n't no mo' 'n three year old we commenced a-takin' him round to

church wherever they held meetin's,—'Piscopals, Methodists or Presbyterians,—so 's he could see an' hear for hisself. I ca'yed him to a baptizin' over to Chinquepin Crik, once-t, when he was three. I thought I 'd let him see it done an' maybe it might make a good impression; but no, sir! The Baptists did n't suit him! Cried ever' time one was douced, an' I had to fetch him away. In 'our Methodist meetin's he seemed to git worked up an' pervoked, some way. An' the Presbyterians, he did n't take no stock in them at all. Ricollect, one Sunday the preacher, he preached a mighty powerful disco'se on the doctrine o' lost infants not 'lected to salvation—an' Sonny? Why, he slep' right thoo it.

The first any way lively interest he ever seemed to take in religious services was at the 'Piscopals, Easter Sunday. When he seen the lilies an' the candles he thess clapped his little hands, an' time the folks commenced answerin' back he was tickled all but to death, an' started answerin' hisself—on'y, of co'se he 'd answer sort o' hit an' miss.

I see then that Sonny was a natu'al-born 'Piscopal, an' we might ez well make up our minds to it—an' I told *her* so, too. They say some is born so. But we thought we 'd let him alone an' let nature take its co'se for awhile—not pressin' him one way or another. He never had showed no disposition to be christened, an' ever sence the doctor tried to vaccinate him he seemed to git the notion that christenin' an' vaccination was mo' or less the same thing; an' sence that time, he 's been mo' opposed to it than ever.

Sir? Oh no, sir. He did n't vaccinate him; he thess tried to do it; but Sonny, he would n't begin to allow it. We all tried to indoose 'im. I offered him everything on the farm ef he 'd thess roll up his little sleeve an' let the doctor look at his arm—promised him that he would n't tech a needle to it tell he said the word. But he would n't. He 'lowed thet me an' his mama could git vaccinated ef we wanted to, but he would n't.

Then we showed him our marks where we had been vaccinated when we was lit-

tle, an' told him how it had kep' us clair o' havin' the smallpock all our lives.

Well, sir, it did n't make no diff'ence whether we 'd been did befo' or not, he 'lowed thet he wanted to see us vaccinated ag'in.

An' so, of co'se, thinkin' it might encour'ge him, we thess had it did over—tryin' to coax him to consent after each one, an' makin' pertend like we enjoyed it.

Then, nothin' would do but the nigger, Dicey, had to be did, an' then he 'lowed thet he wanted the cat did, an' I tried to strike a bargain with him thet if Kitty got vaccinated he would. But he would n't comp'omise. He thess let on thet Kit had to be did whe'r or no. So I ast the doctor ef it would likely kill the cat, an' he said he reckoned not, though it might sicken her a little. So I told him to go ahead. Well, sir, befo' Sonny got thoo, he had had that cat an' both dogs vaccinated—but let it tech hisself he would not.

I was mighty sorry not to have it did, 'cause they was a nigger thet had the smallpock down to Cedar Branch, fifteen

mile away, an' he did n't die, neither. He got well. An' they say when they git well they 're more fatal to a neighborhood 'n when they die.

That was fo' months ago now, but to this day ever' time the wind blows from sou'west I feel oneasy, an' try to entice Sonny to play on the far side o' the house.

Well, sir, in about ten days after that we was the down-in-the-mouthest crowd on that farm, man an' beast, thet you ever see. Ever' last one o' them vaccinations took, sir, an' took severe, from the cat up.

But I reckon we 're all safe-t guarded now. They ain't nothin' on the place thet can fetch it to Sonny, an' I trust, with care, he may never be exposed.

But I set out to tell you about Sonny's christenin' an' us turnin' 'Piscopal. Ez I said, he never seemed to want baptism, though he had heard us discuss all his life both it an' vaccination ez the two ordeels to be gone thoo with some time, an' we 'd speculate ez to whether vaccination would take or not, an' all sech ez that, an' then, ez I said, after he see what the vaccination

was, why he was even mo' prejudyced agin' baptism 'n ever, an' we 'lowed to let it run on tell sech a time ez he 'd decide what name he 'd want to take an' what denomination he 'd want to bestow it on him.

Wife, she's got some 'Piscopal relations thet she sort o' looks up to,—though she don't own it,—but she was raised Methodist an' I was raised a true-blue Presbyterian. But when we professed after Sonny come we went up together at Methodist meetin'. What we was after was righteous livin', an' we did n't keer much which denomination helped us to it.

An' so, feelin' friendly all roun' that-away, we thought we 'd leave Sonny to pick his church when he got ready, an' then they would n't be nothin' to undo or do over in case he went over to the 'Piscopals, which has the name of revisin' over any other church's performances—though sence we 've turned 'Piscopals we 've found out that ain't so.

Of co'se the preachers, they used to talk to us about it once-t in a while,—seemed

to think it ought to be did,—'ceptin', of co'se, the Baptists.

Well, sir, it went along so till last week. Sonny ain't but, ez I said, thess not quite six year old, an' they seemed to be time enough. But last week he had been playin' out o' doors bare-footed, thess same ez he always does, an' he tramped on a pine splinter some way. Of co'se, pine, it's the safe-t-est splinter a person can run into a foot, on account of its carryin' its own turpentine in with it to heal up things; but any splinter thet dast to push itself up into a little pink foot is a messenger of trouble, an' we know it. An' so, when we see this one, we tried ever' way to coax him to let us take it out, but he would n't, of co'se. He never will, an' somehow the Lord seems to give 'em ambition to work their own way out mos' gen'ally.

But, sir, this splinter did n't seem to have no energy in it. It thess lodged there, an' his little foot it commenced to swell, an' it swole an' swole till his little toes stuck out so thet the little pig thet went to market looked like ez ef it was n't

on speakin' terms with the little pig thet stayed home, an' wife an' me we watched it, an' I reckon she prayed over it consider'ble, an' I read a extry psalm at night befo' I went to bed, all on account o' that little foot. An' night befo' las' it was lookin' mighty angry an' swole, an' he had limped an' "ouched!" consider'ble all day, an' he was mighty fretful bed-time. So, after he went to sleep, wife she come out on the po'ch where I was settin', and she says to me, says she, her face all drawed up an' workin', says she: "Honey," says she, "I reckon we better sen' for him an' have it did." Thess so, she said it. "Sen' for who, wife?" says I, "an' have what did?" "Why, sen' for him, the 'Piscopal preacher," says she, "an' have Sonny christened. Them little toes o' hisn is ez red ez cherry tomatoes. They burnt my lips thess now like a coal o' fire an'—an' lock-jaw is goin' roun' tur'ble.

"Seems to me," says she, "when he started to git sleepy, he did n't gap ez wide ez he gen'ly does—an' I 'm 'feered he 's a-git-tin' it now." An', sir, with that, she thess

gathered up her apron an' mopped her face in it an' give way. An' ez for me, I did n't seem to have no mo' backbone down my spinal colume 'n a feather bolster has, I was that weak.

I never ast her why she did n't sen' for our own preacher. I knowed then ez well ez ef she 'd 'a' told me why she done it—all on account o' Sonny bein' so tickled over the 'Piscopals' meetin's.

It was mos' nine o'clock then, an' a dark night, an' rainin', but I never said a word—they was n't no room round the edges o' the lump in my throat for words to come out ef they 'd 'a' been one surgin' up there to say, which they was n't—but I thess went out an' saddled my horse an' I rid into town. Stopped first at the doctor's an' sent him out, though I knowed 't would n't do no good; Sonny would n't 'low him to tech it; but I sent him out anyway, to look at it, an', ef possible, console wife a little. Then I rid on to the rector's an' ast him to come out immejate an' baptize Sonny. But nex' day was his turn to preach down at Sandy Crik, an' he could n't come that

night, but he promised to come right after services nex' mornin'—which he done—rid the whole fo'teen mile from Sandy Crik here in the rain, too, which I think is a evidence o' Christianity, though no sech acts is put down in my book o' "evidences" where they ought rightfully to be.

Well, sir, when I got home that night, I found wife a heap cheerfuler. The doctor had give Sonny a big apple to eat an' pronounced him free from all symptoms o' lockjaw. But when I come the little feller had crawled 'way back under the bed an' lay there, eatin' his apple, an' they could n't git him out. Soon ez the doctor had teched a poultice to his foot he had woke up an' put a stop to it, an' then he had went off by hissself where nothin' could n't pester him, to enjoy his apple in peace. An' we never got him out tell he heered us tellin' the doctor good-night.

I tried ever' way to git him out—even took up a coal o' fire an' poked it under at him; but he thess laughed at that an' helt his apple agin' it an' made it sizz. Well, sir, he seemed so tickled thet I helt that

coal o' fire for him tell he cooked a good big spot on one side o' the apple, an' et it, an' then, when I took it out, he called for another, but I did n't give it to him. I don't see no use in over-indulgin' a child. An' when he knowed the doctor was gone, he come out an' finished roastin' his apple by the fire — thess what was left of it 'round the co'e.

Well, sir, we was mightily comforted by the doctor's visit, but nex' mornin' things looked purty gloomy ag'in. That little foot seemed a heap worse, an' he was sort o' flushed an' feverish, an' wife she thought she heard a owl hoot, an' Rover made a mighty funny gurgly sound in his th'oat like ez ef he had bad news to tell us, but did n't have the courage to speak it.

An' then, on top o' that, the nigger Dicey, she come in an' 'lowed she had dreamed that night about eatin' spare-ribs, which everybody knows to dream about fresh pork out o' season, which this is July, is considered a shore sign o' death. Of co'se, wife an' me, we don't b'lieve in no sech ez that, but ef you ever come to

see yo' little feller's toes stand out the way Sonny's done day befo' yesterday, why, sir, you 'll be ready to b'lieve anything. It 's so much better now, you can't judge of its looks day befo' yesterday. We never had even so much ez considered it necessary thet little children should be christened to have 'em saved, but when things got on the ticklish edge, like they was then, why, we felt thet the safest side is the wise side, an', of co'se, we want Sonny to have the best of everything. So, we was mighty thankful when we see the rec-tor comin'. But, sir, when I went out to open the gate for him, what on top o' this round hemisp'ere do you reckon Sonny done? Why, sir, he thess took one look at the gate an' then he cut an' run hard ez he could — limped acrost the yard thess like a flash o' zig-zag lightnin' — an' 'fore anybody could stop him, he had clumb to the tip top o' the butter-bean arbor — clumb it thess like a cat — an' there he set, a-swingin' his feet under him, an' laughin', the rain thess a-streakin' his hair all over his face.

That bean arbor is a favoryte place for him to escape to, 'cause it's too high to reach, an' it ain't strong enough to bear no grown-up person's weight.

Well, sir, the rector, he come in an' opened his valise an' 'rayed hissself in his robes an' opened his book, an' while he was turnin' the leaves, he faced 'round an' says he, lookin' at me *direc'*, says he:

"Let the child be brought forward for baptism," says he, thess that-a-way.

Well, sir, I looked at wife, an' wife, she looked at me, an' then we both thess looked out at the butter-bean arbor.

I knowed then thet Sonny was n't never comin' down while the rector was there, an' rector, he seemed sort o' fretted for a minute when he see how things was, an' he did try to do a little settin' fo'th of opinions. He 'lowed, speakin' in a mighty pompious manner, thet holy things was n't to be trifled with, an' thet he had come to baptize the child accordin' to the rites o' the church.

Well, that sort o' talk, it thess rubbed me the wrong way, an' I up an' told him

thet that might be so, but thet the rites o' the church did n't count for nothin', on our farm, to the rights o' the boy!

I reckon it was mighty disrespec'ful o' me to face him that-a-way, an' him adorned in all his robes, too, but I 'm thess a plain up-an'-down man an' I had n't went for him to come an' baptize Sonny to uphold the granjer of no church. I was ready to do that when the time come, but right now we was workin' in Sonny's interests, an' I intended to have it understood that way. An' it was.

Rector, he's a mighty good, kind-hearted man, git down to the man inside the preacher, an' when he see thess how things stood, why, he come 'round friendly, an' he went out on the po'ch an' united with us in tryin' to help coax Sonny down. First started by promisin' him speritual benefits, but he soon see that was n't no go, and he tried worldly persuasion; but no, sir, stid o' him comin' down, Sonny started orderin' the rest of us christened thess the way he done about the vaccination. But, of co'se, we had been baptized

befo', an' we nachelly helt out agin' that for some time. But d'rec'ly rector, he seemed to have a sudden idee, an' says he, facin' 'round, church-like, to wife an' me, says he:

"Have you both been baptized accordin' to the rites o' the church?"

An' me, thinkin' of co'se he meant the 'Piscopal Church, says: "No, sir," says I, thess so. And then we see that the way was open for us to be did over ag'in ef we wanted to. So, sir, wife an' me we was took into the church, then an' there. We would n't a yielded to him, thoo an' thoo, that-a-way ag'in ef his little foot had n't a' been so swole, an' he maybe takin' his death o' cold settin' out in the po'in'-down rain; but things bein' as they was, we went thoo it with all due respects.

Then he commenced callin' for Dicey, an' the dog, an' the cat, to be did, same ez he done befo'; but, of co'se, they 's some liberties that even a innocent child can't take with the waters o' baptism, an' the rector he got sort o' wo'e-out and disgusted an' 'lowed that 'less'n we could get the

child ready for baptism he 'd haf to go home.

Well, sir, I knowed we would n't never git 'im down, an' I had went for the rector to baptize him, an' I intended to have it did, ef possible. So, says I, turnin' 'round an' facin' him square, says I: "Rector," says I, "why not baptize him where he is? I mean it. The waters o' Heaven are descendin' upon him where he sets, an' seems to me ef he 's favo'bly situated for anything it is for baptism." Well, parson, he thess looked at me up an' down for a minute, like ez ef he s'picioned I was wanderin' in my mind, but he did n't faze me. I thess kep' up my argiment. Says I: "Parson," says I, speakin' thess ez ca'm ez I am this minute—"Parson," says I, "his little foot is mighty swole, an' so'e, an' that splinter—thess s'pose he was to take the lockjaw an' die—don't you reckon you might do it where he sets—from where you stand?"

Wife, she was cryin' by this time, an' parson, he claired his th'oat an' coughed, an' then he commenced walkin' up an'

down, an' treckly he stopped, an' says he, speakin' mighty reverential an' serious:

"Lookin' at this case speritually, an' as a minister o' the Gospel," says he, "it seems to me thet the question ain't so much a question of *doin'* ez it is a question of *withholdin'*. I don't know," says he, "ez I 've got a right to withhold the sacrament o' baptism from a child under these circumstances or to deny sech comfort to his parents ez lies in my power to bestow."

An', sir, with that he stepped out to the end o' the po'ch, opened his book ag'in, an' holdin' up his right hand to'ards Sonny, settin' on top o' the bean-arbor in the rain, he commenced to read the service o' baptism, an' we stood proxies—which is a sort o' a dummy substitutes—for whatever godfather an' mother Sonny see fit to choose in after life.

Parson, he looked half like ez ef he 'd laugh once-t. When he had thess opened his book and started to speak, a sudden streak o' sunshine shot out an' the rain started to ease up, an' it looked for a minute ez ef he was goin' to lose the baptismal

waters. But d'rec'ly it come down stiddy ag'in an' he' went thoo the programme entire.

An' Sonny, he behaved mighty purty; set up perfec'ly ca'm an' composed thoo it all, an' took everything in good part, though he did n't p'intedly know who was bein' baptized, 'cause, of co'se, he could n't hear the words with the rain in his ears.

He did n't rightly sense the situation tell it come to the part where it says: "Name this child," and, of co'se, I called out to Sonny to name hisself, which it had always been our intention to let him do.

"Name yo'self, right quick, like a good boy," says I.

Of co'se Sonny had all his life heered me say thet I was Deuteronomy Jones, Senior, an' thet I hoped some day when he got christened he 'd be the junior. He knowed that by heart, an' would agree to it or dispute it, 'cordin' to how the notion took him, and I sort o' ca'culated thet he 'd out with it now. But no, sir! Not a word! He thess sot up on thet bean-arbor an' grinned.

An' so, feelin' put to it, with the services suspended over my head, I spoke up, an' I says: "Parson," says I, "I reckon ef he was to speak his little heart, he 'd say Deuteronomy Jones, Junior." An' with thet what does Sonny do but conterdic' me flat! "No, not Junior! I want to be named Deuteronomy Jones, Senior!" says he, thess so. An' parson, he looked to'ards me, an' I bowed my head an' he pernounced thess one single name, "Deuteronomy," an' I see he was n't goin' to say no more an' so I spoke up quick, an' says I: "Parson," says I, "he has spoke his heart's desire. He has named hisself after me entire—Deuteronomy Jones, Senior."

An' so he was obligated to say it, an' so it is writ in the family record colume in the big Bible, though I spelt his Senior with a little s, an' writ him down ez the only son of the Senior with the big S, which it seems to me fixes it about right for the time bein'.

Well, when the rector had got thoo an' he had wropped up his robes an' put 'em in his wallet, an' had told us to prepare

for conformation, he pernounced a blessin' upon us an' went.

An' then Sonny seein' it was all over, he come down. He was wet ez a drownded rat, but wife rubbed him off an' give him some hot tea an' he come a-snuggin' up in my lap, thess ez sweet a child ez you ever see in yo' life, an' I talked to him ez fatherly ez I could, told him we was all 'Piscopals now, an' soon ez his little foot got well I was goin' to take him out to Sunday-school to tote a banner— all his little 'Piscopal friends totes banners— an' thet he could pick out some purty candles for the altar, an' he 'lowed immejate thet he 'd buy pink ones. Sonny always was death on pink— showed it from the time he could snatch a pink rose— an' wife she ain't never dressed him in nothin' else. Ever' pair o' little breeches he 's got is either pink or pink-trimmed.

Well, I talked along to him till I worked 'round to shamin' him a little for havin' to be christened settin' up on top a bean-arbor, same ez a crow-bird, which I told him the parson he would n't 'a' done ef he 'd 'a'

felt free to 've left it undone. 'T was n't to indulge him he done it, but to bless him an' to comfort our hearts. Well, after I had reasoned with him severe that-a-way a while, he says, says he, thess ez sweet an' mild, says he, "Daddy, nex' time y 'all gits christened, I'll come down an' be christened right — like a good boy."

Th' ain't a sweeter child in'ardly 'n what Sonny is, nowheres, git him to feel right comf'table, an' I know it, an' that 's why I have patience with his little out'ard ways.

"Yes, sir," says he; "nex' time I 'll be christened like a good boy."

Then, of co'se, I explained to him thet it could n't never be did no mo', 'cause it had been did, an' did 'Piscopal, which is secure. An' then what you reckon the little feller said?

Says he, "Yes, daddy, but *s'pos'in' mine don't take*. How 'bout that?"

An' I did n't try to explain no further. What was the use? Wife, she had drawn a stool close-t up to my knee, an' set there sortin' out the little yaller rings ez they 'd dry out on his head, an' when he said that

I thess looked at her an' we both looked at him, an' says I, "Wife," says I, "ef they 's anything in heavenly looks an' behavior, I b'lieve that christenin' is started to take on him a'ready."

An' I b'lieve it had.