

## *The Bible in My Trunk*

"When I was a young man," said a certain clergyman, "I was clerk in Boston. Two of my roommates at my boarding house were also clerks, about my own age, which was eighteen. The Sunday morning, during the three or four hours that elapsed from getting up to bell ringing for church, I felt a secret desire to get my Bible, which my mother had given me, out of my trunk and read in it, for I had been brought up so by my parents as to regard it as a duty at home to read a chapter or two in the Bible every Sunday. I was now very anxious to get my Bible and read, but I was afraid to do so before my roommates, who were reading some miscellaneous books.

"At length my conscience got the mastery, and I rose up and went to my trunk. I had half raised the trunk lid when the thought occurred to me that it might look like over-sanctity and Pharisaical, so I shut up my trunk and returned to the window. For twenty minutes I was miserably ill at ease; I felt I was doing wrong. I started a second time for my trunk, and had my hands upon the little Bible, when the fear of being laughed at conquered the better emotion, and I again dropped the top of the trunk. As I turned away from it, one of my roommates, who observed my irresolute movements, said laughingly, 'I say, what is the matter? You seem as restless as a weathercock!'

"I replied by laughing in my turn, and then, conceiving the truth to be the best, frankly told them both what was the matter.

"To my surprise and delight they spoke up, and answered that they both had Bibles in their trunks, and both had been secretly wishing to read in them, but were afraid to take them out lest I should laugh at them. 'Then,' said I, 'Let us agree to read them every Sunday, and we shall have the laugh all on the one side.'

"This was a hearty response and the next moment the three Bibles were out, and I assure you we felt happier all that day for reading them that morning.

"The following Sunday, about ten o'clock, while we were each reading our chapters, two of our fellow boarders from another room came in. When they saw how we were engaged they stared, and then exclaimed, 'Bless us! what is all this? A Conventicle?'

"In reply I, smiling, related to them exactly how the matter stood; my struggle to get my Bible from my trunk, and how we three, having found we had all been afraid of each other without cause, had now agreed to read every Sunday.

" 'Not a bad idea,' answered one of them. 'You have more courage than I have. I have a Bible, too, but have not looked in it since I have been in Boston. But I'll read after

this, since you've broken the ice.'

"The other then asked one of us to read aloud, and both sat and quietly listened until the bell rang for church.

"That evening we three in the same room agreed to have a chapter read every night, by one or the other of us, at nine o'clock, and we were religiously adhered to our purpose. A few evenings after this resolution, four or five of the boarders (for there were sixteen boarders in the house) happened to be in our room talking when the nine o'clock bell rang. One of my roommates, looking at me, opened the Bible. The others looked inquiringly. I then explained our custom.

" 'We'll all stay and listen,' they said, almost unanimously.

"The result was that, without an exception, every one of the sixteen clerks spent his Sabbath morning in reading the Bible, and the moral effect upon our household was of the highest character.

"I relate this incident," concluded the clergyman, "to show what influence one person – even a youth – may exert for evil or good. No man should ever be afraid to do his duty. A hundred hearts may throb to act right who only want a leader, I forgot to add that we were all called the 'Bible Clerks!' All these youths are now useful and Christian men, and more than one is laboring in the ministry."

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