

**The Story of Waitstill Baxter**

(Continued from page 2, Col. 3.)

"7. And Moses laid up the rods before the Lord in the tabernacle of witness."  
"8. And it came to pass, that on the morrow Moses went into the tabernacle of witness: and behold, the rod of Aaron was budded and brought forth buds, and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds."  
It was Aaron's rod, then, and was an almond branch! How beautiful, for the blossoms would have been pink:



Rodman Took His Bible and Read.

and how the people must have marvelled to see the lovely blooming thing on the dark altar, first budding, then blossoming, then bearing nuts! And what was the rod chosen for? He hurried on to the next verse:

"9. And Moses brought out all the rods from before the Lord unto all the children of Israel; and they looked, and took every man his rod."

"10. And the Lord said unto Moses, Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony to be kept for a token against the rebels; and thou shalt quite take away their murmurings from me, that they die not."

"Oh, Aunt Boynton," cried the boy, "I love my name after I've heard about the almond rod! Aren't you proud that it's uncle's name that was written on the one that blossomed?"

He turned swiftly to find that his aunt's knitting had slipped on the floor; her nerveless hands drooped by her side as if there were no life in them, and her head had fallen against the back of her chair. The boy was paralyzed with fear at the sight of her closed eyes and the deathly pallor of her face. He had never seen her like this before, and Ivory was away. He flew for a bottle of spirit, always kept in the kitchen cupboard for emergencies, and throwing wood on the fire in passing, he swung the crane so that the tea kettle was over the flame. He knew only the humble remedies that he had seen used here or there in illness and tried them timidly, praying every moment that he might hear Ivory's step. He warmed a soapstone in the embers and, taking off Mrs. Boynton's shoes, put it under her cold feet. He chafed her hands and gently poured a spoonful of brandy between her pale lips. Then, sprinkling camphor on a handkerchief, he held it to her nostrils, and to his joy she stirred in her chair; before many minutes her lids fluttered, her lips moved, and she put her hand to her heart.

"Are you better, aunt dear?" Rod asked in a very wavering and tearful voice.

She did not answer; she only opened her eyes and looked at him. At length she whispered faintly, "I want Ivory; I want my son."

"He's out, aunt dear. Shall I help you to bed the way Ivory does? If you'll let me, then I'll run to the bridge 'cross lots like lightning and bring him back."

She assented and, leaning heavily on his slender shoulder, walked feebly into her bedroom off the living room. Rod was as gentle as a mother, and he was familiar with all the little offices that could be of any comfort—the soapstone warmed again for her feet, the bringing of her nightgown from the closet and when she was in bed another spoonful of brandy in hot milk; then the camphor by her side, an extra homespun blanket over her and the door left open so that she could see the open fire that he made into a cheerful huddle, contrived so that it would not snap and throw out dangerous sparks in his absence.

All the while he was doing this Mrs. Boynton lay quietly in the bed talking to herself fitfully in the faint murmuring tone that was habitual to her. He could distinguish scarcely anything, only enough to guess that her mind was still on the Bible story that he was reading to her when she fainted. "The rod of Aaron was among the other rods," he heard her say, and a moment later, "Bring Aaron's rod again before the testimony."

Was it his uncle's name that had so affected her? wondered the boy, almost sick with remorse, although he had tried his best to evade her command to read the chapter aloud. What would Ivory, his hero, his pattern and

example, say? It had always been Rod's pride, to carry his little share of every burden that fell to Ivory, to be faithful and helpful in every task given to him. He could walk through fire without flinching, he thought, if Ivory told him to, and he only prayed that he might not be held responsible for this new calamity.

"I want Ivory!" came in a feeble voice from the bedroom.

"Does your side ache worse?" Rod asked, tiptoeing to the door.

"No. I am quite free from pain."

"Would you be afraid to stay alone just for awhile if I lock both doors and run to find Ivory and bring him back?"

"No. I will sleep," she whispered, closing her eyes. "Bring him quickly before I forget what I want to say to him."

Rod sped down the lane and over the fields to the brick store where Ivory usually bought his groceries. His cousin was not there, but one of the men came out and offered to take his horse and drive over the bridge to see if he were at one of the neighbors' on that side of the river. Not a word did Rod breathe of his aunt's illness; he simply said that she was lonesome for Ivory, and so he came to find him. In five minutes they saw the Boynton horse hitched to a tree by the roadside, and in a trice Rod called him and, thanking Mr. Bixby, got into Ivory's wagon to wait for him. He tried his best to explain the situation as they drove along, but finally concluded by saying: "Aunt really made me read the chapter to her, Ivory. I tried not to when I saw uncle's name in most every verse, but I couldn't help it."

"Of course you couldn't! Now you jump out and hitch the horse while I run in and see that nothing has happened while she's been left alone. Perhaps you'll have to go for Dr. Perry."

Ivory went in with fear and trembling, for there was no sound save the ticking of the tall clock. The fire burned low upon the hearth, and the door was open into his mother's room. He lifted a candle that Rod had left ready on the table and stole softly to her bedside. She was sleeping like a child, but exhaustion showed itself in every line of her face. He felt her hands and feet and found the soapstone in the bed, saw the brandy bottle and the remains of a cup of milk on the light stand, noted the handkerchief, still strong of camphor, on the counterpane and the blanket spread carefully over her knees, and then turned approvingly to meet Rod stealing into the room on tiptoe, his eyes big with fear.

"We won't wake her, Rod. I'll watch awhile, then sleep on the sitting room lounge."

"Let me watch, Ivory! I'd feel better if you'd let me, honest I would!"

The boy's face was drawn with anxiety. Ivory's attention was attracted by the wistful eyes and the beauty of the forehead under the dark hair. He seemed something more than the child of yesterday—a care and responsibility and expense for all his loving obedience; he seemed all at once different tonight—older, more dependable, more trustworthy—in fact, a positive comfort and help in time of trouble.

"I did the best I knew how. Was anything wrong?" asked the boy, as Ivory stood regarding him with a friendly smile.

"Nothing wrong, Rod! Dr. Perry couldn't have done any better with what you had on hand. I don't know how I should get along without you, boy! Here Ivory patted Rod's shoulder. "You're not a child any longer. Rod, you're a man and a brother, that's what you are, and to prove it I'll take the first watch and call you up at 1 o'clock to take the second so that I can be ready for my school work tomorrow. How does that suit you?"

"Tiptop!" said the boy, flushing with pride. "I'll lie down with my clothes on; it's only 9 o'clock and I'll get four hours' sleep; that's a lot more than Napoleon used to have."

He carried the Bible upstairs and just before he blew out his candle he looked again at the chapter in Numbers, thinking he would show it to Ivory privately next day. Again the story enchanted him, and again, like a child, he puts his own name and his living self among the rods in the tabernacle.

"Ivory would be the prince of our house," he thought. "Oh, how I'd like to be Ivory's rod and have it be the one that was chosen to blossom and keep the rebels from murmuring!"

(Continued next week.)

**Universal Confidant.**

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**Truth Bluntly Expressed.**

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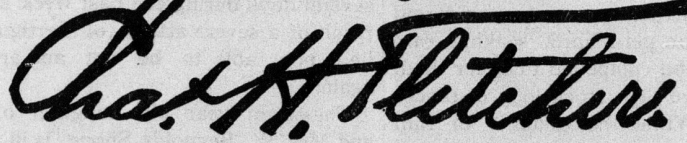
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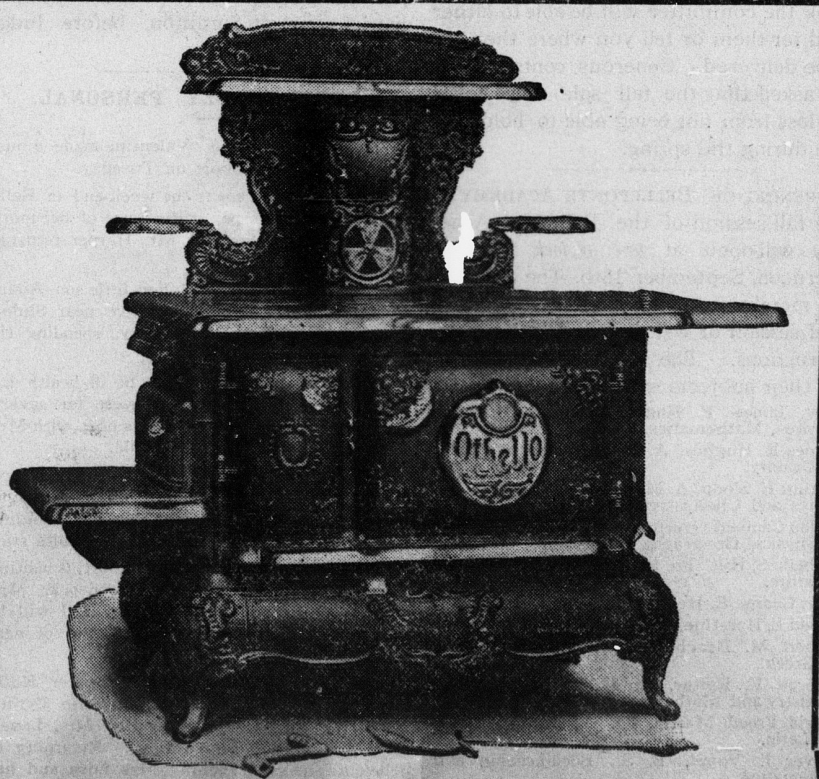
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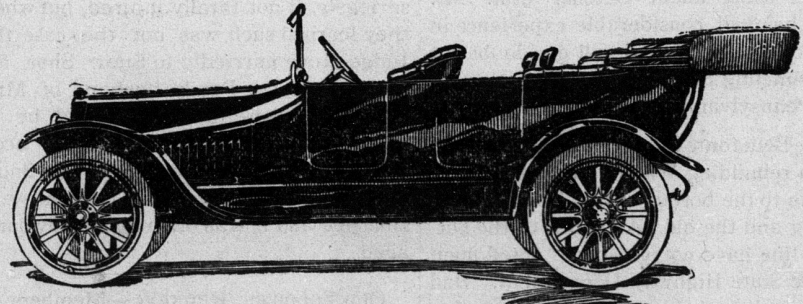
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