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“HE DRINKS LIKE A FISH.”

One evening in November last, Mrs. Higgins, Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Smith, and a maiden lady, Miss Tattle, all met at the house of that worthy person, Mrs. Tellit, to take tea, and pass the remainder of the evening.

I do not wish to intimate that they were noisy, or conducted themselves in any but a respectable manner, but they

Miss Tattle talked considerable; all the affairs of persons all talked, and sometimes their tongues were going all at once. In the neighbourhood were in turn discussed, and their conduct, business, and manners commented upon; Miss so and so's extravagance; Mr. so and so's treatment of his wife; Mrs. so and so's kind behaviour and forbearance;—but I will not attempt the recital of the many subjects of their conversation, for I fear if I did so, my supply of paper would fall short, and you would lose the sketch I promise you; suffice it to say, they were the longest while at the tea-table that I ever knew ladies to remain, and that none were for a moment at loss for words, so that it may be judged much was there said.

“There!” broke out Mrs. Smith, just as their conversation was at its highest pitch, “a little more and I should have forgotten it.”

“What?” asked four voices anxiously.

“And such a man, too.”

“Who?”—“what?”—“what is it?”—“speak plainly?” came again from the four.

“Mr. Richards—the new apothecary on the corner.”

“What of him?”

“*He drinks like a fish!*”

Mrs. Brown put down her tea-cup, and looked Mrs. Smith full in the face; Miss Tattle hastily swallowed a piece of cake and came near choking, and Mrs. Higgins grasped Mrs. Tellit's hand in great excitement, while Mrs. Smith had already had taken another sip of tea, and then composedly leaned back in her chair.

“Horrible!” at length faintly ejaculated some one.

“And so young, too,” said Mrs. B.

“And doing a good business,” added Miss Tattle.

“I thought there was a dissipated look about him, and I was determined to keep my eyes upon him and his movements,” said Mrs. Tellit.

“Well, to tell the truth, he did look rather dissipated, I must say,” put in Miss Tattle, “and Mrs. ———, where he boards, says that he stops out dreadful late at night, and he tells her it is on account of his business.”

“Business, indeed, a pretty business fellow he. If he drinks he has other faults no doubt; I noticed Mrs. G——, the widow, call there very often of late.”

“I don't venture in his store again, I warrant!” asserted Miss Tattle with much warmth, as though *her* person stood in danger.

Mainfold were the ejaculations, sentences, and words uttered upon the occasion; never was such an exciting topic discussed in Mrs. Tellit's little back parlor as the present one; and the clock struck nine before the conversation began to lag in the least upon the subject, and at that moment some one asked Mrs. Smith how she discovered this important fact.

“Why,” said Mrs. S., “the other morning I stopped the butcher as he passed my window, and as he keeps on the opposite corner, I thought he might have a good chance of knowing the character of the young apothecary; so I asked him what his opinion was of this person, he evaded giving an answer for some time, but he couldn't escape me so very easily, and I asked him again. ‘Oh, he's a very smart young man,’ said he, ‘he seems attentive to his business, and has already a good run of custom; but——’ and he faltered. ‘But what?’ asked I. ‘There is one thing, Mrs. Smith,’ says he, ‘there is one thing that I would not mention to another person besides yourself, and not to you if you were not well known by me, to be a person who would not make such a thing known, but, though I am very sorry to say it, *he drinks like a fish.*”

“Unfortunate young man!” sighed all.

“We shall be made known with all the particulars tonight, for Mr. Smith is going to step into the butcher's and try to get them all out of him; he said he didn't believe it, but he will be here soon, and then we shall know the whole.”

If any of my readers could have seen the butcher and the apothecary in the latter named gentleman's little “eight by ten” back shop, and have listened to the loud peals of laughter that made all ring again, I think they would have been justified in venturing an opinion that the butcher was one of the dissipated person's “rum companions;” but if they could have also known at what they were laughing, I am now inclined to think they would have joined in.

That butcher was a wag, a merry-hearted, jovial fellow, with his laugh and joke for most every one, and, on the morning Mrs. Smith had spoken to him, he felt in a decidedly humorous mood; he knew her much better than persons would be inclined to think he did, from what he told her, and he was aware that anything given to her as a secret would not remain one long, and when he “evaded an answer,” as Mrs. Smith termed it, he was thinking of some-