

Biliousness, Liver Complaint

If your tongue is coated, your eyes yellow, your complexion sallow; if you have sick headaches, variable appetite, poor circulation, a pain under the right shoulder, or alternate constiveness and diarrhoea, floating specks before the eyes,

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make straightway for the front for the sublimity of the sea view.

But he heard the low murmur of voices, and before the traditions concerning Spook House could pierce his sense with any terror, he distinctly recognized Mary Stingaree's voice. Amaze and curiosity held him still. Standing on a bank of underbrush, he could look through the yawning windows to those that were also a paneless, yawning gulf on the other side. There, outside the church, leaning against the rotten window-sill, stood Mary and myself—Jim Turbine. Our faces were turned from him, our view was to the sea. A sudden mad jealousy seized Rob, to whom I had been an object quite outside the pale of any serious friendship with a woman like Mary Stingaree.

"Well," I said to Mary, unaware of my smouldering audience at the rear of the church, "if you wish, I'll go down to the River and see what I can do to get Rob and Bate away from Tee-bo's."

"They both went down there," she answered. "Virginia told me. She gets all the gossip, voluntarily rendered through Mrs. Treet."

"At the house I hardly felt inclined to bother with 'em," I said; "but when you look off here, things that did not seem of so much consequence get up and sing inside a man as though they demanded to be heard before other things. That is all the way I can put it. I reckon you understand."

"My 'brother' Jim! I knew that you would go. Did I take an unfair advantage," she added, half smiling, "in bringing you here, on the way, to look off over sea and land? Shall you go down the footpath of the ledges, Jim? I'll go back home alone, and I shall think of you—with more gratitude—than I can ever speak—every step of the way."

She was eager to have me gone. I never yet had stumbled by luck on any romantic situation with Mary, but that the summons came to me from some quarter or other to go off straightway and risk my neck somewhere for the sake of other folks. Still, I made easy of the fatality, being dire used to it. I loitered only a few moments.

"You can easily manage to get Robert away, I think," she continued rapidly; "you can easily persuade him! but Bate, in spite of his degradation, is a man in determination, you know."

"Rob threw Tee-bo's jug of rum of into the riverbed, so I've heard."

"Yes, but he was in a pet. There's no 'hold-fast' to him. In another mood, a little hardship or disappointment, and he would drink again like a fish."

She sighed and turned her face northward, where the evening star shone. Rob saw the beautiful profile. I looked, too, wistfully.

"Mary," I said, "I've offered myself to you many times, I know, and I am not worthy of you. I do not blame you. But if you could ever look to me a bit, I'd give my life to make you happy."

"You honor me, I know that," she replied graciously, and with an intensity meant to compensate me for the loss of all, "but—forgive me—that can never be."

She rested her hand on my arm, and I upheld her. But I reckoned, though she saw far, there were some steep places in the world that poor Rob and I, even, might have a better knowledge of than she.

"Is there anyone else, Mary?" I said. "I am such an old friend, you might tell me if there is anyone else?"

She seemed to regard the question as too meaningless to require an answer; her look seaward was not that of a girl remembering a lover; it was only thoughtful, as though her soul went gravely off that way.

"I believe poor 'Daisy' loves you with all his heart," I said.

She came back from her abstraction, and laughed.

"He is a charming boy, when he is

himself, but he is not a man at all, Jim. Whatever put such a thought into your head? Rob! why, he does not seem to me to be a man at all."

Someone slunk away in the shadows. I went my way down the ledges, and Mary went her way along the trail, home. Neither of us saw Rob. Like a stag, vitally shot, proud to die alone, he turned aside where no one would overtake him, and sat down weakly upon a stone behind a clump of bushes.

Moments elapsed before he lifted his head again to the solemn, sentient scene spread wide before him. For his making or his marring, he was alone in the universe, now. Every prop had fallen away from him. The last friend of all—and the dearest he had ever known—had scorned him. He saw again her sweet profile, he heard her slighting words.

"He—he is not a man at all." And earth and air repeated the words about him, not jeeringly, but with an immeasurable sorrow. Rob fell so low that he fell back on elemental reason. Why had Mary seemed so far from him, and the hope of winning her always as suspenseful and vague as yonder infinitely-distant star? He could not "hold fast," he was vain of purpose, weak of will—he was "not a man at all."

The latchkey years came back to him, the nights of carousal, the sodden days, his paralyzing illness, the suicidal, drivelling idiocy of it all. And even when health had been restored through sheer force of circumstances and necessity, his riotous will, at the first sight of the tempter, had plunged him unhesitating into the well of his former dissipation. He had made idle love to a girl whom now he longed to cast from him; he had gone whining to Mary Stingaree with his selfish regrets. He was "not a man at all."

Rob fell so very low that even resentment, which once would have swept in upon him as a flood, had now no place in his soul. All his newly-acquired vigor had oozed from his blood, all courage from his heart. He dreaded to rise. How long he sat there he neither knew nor cared. It was a long vigil. Mary went sadly to her room, leaving the house door open for the return of the wanderers. I went down to the River and found Bate at the evil brew, but not Rob.

Rob sat crushed and hopeless, alone on the mountain-side; unbearably alone when, at last, he staggered to his feet. It was too much. The soul cannot live alone, and Rob, of sheer necessity, cried out.

"O God," moaned the poor lad, "are You anywhere?"

He had a simple fancy that only the old Bible, bending itself to those dilemmas of the soul commonly known as "religion," besides being the traditional refuge of the sick at heart, could tell him that. He crept up to his room noiselessly, and with one hand weakly supporting himself by the table, he opened the ancient volume. "If, after the manner of men"—there it was, again—his text, evidently; God threw it at him persistently. "If, after the manner of men, I have fought with beasts at Ephesus."

Beasts? Beasts of intemperance, perhaps; of reckless riotousness, of selfish passion; of weak, purposeless will? And fighting them for what?

Ah, nothing left now for him in all the world of delight and beauty, but just, as a poor skeleton in moral rags, to try to stand up and "be a man."

Not one bit gloriously, but after the manner of the abject, goaded to his feet in the ring. Not with love and honor and acclaim; but quite forsaken, a beaten soul naked to the scorn of all, even so, unflatteringly now to the death, to stand up and "fight with beasts at Ephesus."

Rob clenched his fists once more, and lifted to heaven the rekindling fire in his woe-beaten eyes. There was still a fight left.

(To be continued.)

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