

## CONSTIPATION

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would-est assweg' my griff, you mek me worser—you mek me *seeck*," she added daringly on her own account, and she yawned—for Cuby was healthy and a regular sleeper, and the steady drone of Rhody's voice was soporific.

"You are not to 'Biggone' me, Cuby Tee-bo," answered Rhody sternly. "Them that you was to say 'Biggone' to has all giv' out. They won't come up, and I'm a-doin' of it all; and you got ter get comforted on me, an' boo-hoo an' repent, the way it is in the book."

Cuby stared blankly at the unalterable severity—from what strain of Puritan ancestry, who knows?—cast upon little Rhody's features. But with a flash of Latin adaptability, "Grief" triumphed, and still carried off the situation at last with glory.

"So they come no more, Rhode?" she said gently, with a soft sigh of satisfaction.

"You got ter git comforted on me," repeated Rhody.

"My griff," now readily assented Cuby sweetly and clearly, with splendid action, "my griff is all assweg'. Your floral off-rings, your so swit' words from the Holee Babbie have lift me up to mek of me a joy so beeg as once was my so gre't griff. I bless-a an' cariss-a you all, and will now retire to my apart-a-mong to give t'anks for all w'at is on me."

Cuby rose, and sailed with a chastened, though supreme, majesty from the stage.

Her performance was regarded as something transcendent throughout. Other numbers of the evening's programme, assumed by some of the maturer members of the Sunday-school, followed; but they appeared trite, they lacked salt and savor altogether, after what had been.

When a little girl, whom you have seen wading barefoot among the clam flats or halloing like a boy at you from some porch in the tree branches, suddenly sails superbly before you, long and willowy in black robes, a Madonna sweetness upon her features a faultless self-possession in her bearing—it sets you to wondering how it all came about. The toss of Cuby's head at the congratulations she received, as she reappeared brilliant in her accustomed be-ribboned garb among the audience, did not detract from this marvel.

As for Rhody, she was accepted by the whole Sunday-school, youth and old, as a staid and promising pillar miraculously supplied to a decaying tabernacle. She went back to the bench where Robsat with Mrs. Skipper and Caroline. Rob's welcoming smile was genial as the sun at noonday and expressed so much pride of Rhody that she blushed slightly herself for vanity of her performance—for the first and only time that evening.

But I was watching another face that had but just entered, in a dim corner of the hall; a face that was staring at Rob Hilton with a sort of fixed horror.

On that night when I brought Rob home from Waldeck I had asked Mary if Bate was in the house. "No," she said; "Bate has not been here for two nights, Jim."

Rob and I had landed late at night. No one had seen us, and Rob with his inflamed arm had not been out since until this evening. So I doubted if any word of Rob, living, had reached Bate.

I made my way quietly down to where he stood.

"Come on out, Bate," I said. "I want a word with you."

My voice seemed to rouse him from the shackles of a nightmare. He followed me out stupidly. He had on a new suit of clothes, with a fine linen shirt, and a watch and chain, and new boots to match, and he was holding a big cigar in his terror palsied hand.

I believe I have never seen anything so pathetic under heaven as the new clothes on that shivering, convicted wretch. Innocence and martyrdom are not so pathetic to me; they have strong white wings that earthly mischance only set free for the upper kingdoms and an incontrovertible estate—but the idiocy of evil, sucking still rapaciously from the dregs of a poisoned glass, God must

mend that, as there are some bodies beyond the skill of earthly physicians to set straight. God, he will mend all; that I believe. You have your notion of pathos, I have mine; and to me Bate Stingaree was pathetic, beyond tears, to what wrings a man's very soul.

But I had to look out for his not following and persecuting Rob any further. I had to put chain and muzzle on him, so to speak, and I went straight to my job.

"Bate," I said, "you and Gar Tee-bo sailed over to Waldeck after us. I know just where you got your boat, I know just the spot where you anchored out of sight; and you sneaked in your dory off the ledges and went ashore, and watched your chance. You felled Rob Hilton in a flash, creeping up behind him like a snake, in a dark alleyway. You took his money and threw him over for dead into the quarry."

Bate gave me a demented grin; then, as if my words had roused him to some force for self-defence in the living world again, his eyes glared at me like those of a beast, his hands twitched as though he could not withhold a blow.

"You," he cried, "mind your business, or I'll—"

"Hand me over what you have left of Rob's money," said I, still even and low, "unless you want to serve out a sentence in prison. I've got to keep an eye on you hereafter, and I shan't fail to do it. It is 'toe-the-mark' or prison for you, Bate. And be quick about what I tell you to do. You don't want to get a crowd out here."

"It's a lie, Jim," said he desperately; "somebody's been tellin' you a lie. Daisy got drunk as a fool, and fell over of his own accord. Tee-bo and me went over on business, and we can prove it; and we happened to see him stumblin' and reelin' along the quarry-side, drunk; we said then he'd likely fall over. That's all we got to do with it."

"Rob Hilton saw the hand that dealt the blow," I informed him, rather impatiently. "And what if I, being an old stager and knowing the ways of a few o' the folks—thank Heaven, there's only a few o' that sort 'round here—what if I arranged to have some of those bills marked that went into Rob's pocket, and that you've got now in your own?"

"I never had no luck," said the craven fellow, "everything and everybody's down on me."

"Hand me over the money," said I. "I didn't have but half of it," he whined.

"I know where to get the other half."

Bate, without further parley, handed to me the fifty dollars he had left. "You're goin' to let this thing drop, now, Jim?" he was trembling, and actually tried to work up an ingratiating smile on his pallid face.

"That's just the trouble," I said. "Somehow everything has to be let drop with you. As you say, you ain't been kindly treated, but it ain't in the way you think. Punishment has been warded off o' you when it might 'a' saved your soul alive to let the chastisement fall hard on your back. You've been shielded when you ought to been made to face the light. I'm a-doin' you all the humanity 'round ye another wrong now, by lettin' ye go. But I can't stand lettin' such a blow fall on that sister o' yours—on Mary."

His face fixed for a sneer from very habit, but he hastened to draw it out respectfully.

"She's a good girl, Mary is," he whined. "I reckon as how some things might kill her. All right, we'll let it drop. You needn't be afraid I'll trouble any of ye any more."

My next business was with Tee-bo. I recovered a full hundred there, and obsequious treatment.

"Bate—he nevaire tell-a me what for he sail to Waldeck. No. I des-spise heem, an' I keel-a heem, eef you weesh. Bate—he mek his invite' to go sail with heem. So I go. I know not'ings. He say 'Man owe me money, w'at he pe'd me. I giv' you hunder' dollar, Gar', 'cause I loaf Cuby, eef you git her to mek marry with me.' I know not'ings. Capataine Jeem. I loaf you. I do w'at you say, only don't you come to mek troubles on me. I tell you, I know not'ings."

(To be continued)

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