

CACOETHES LOQUENDI.

(Continued)

Before the thermometer in her mouth reduced her to silence Mrs. Thayer had time to regret volubly that old Dr. Barnes, her doctor, these thirty years, was away; and the judge too. She was inclined to resist this new authority, but Tom's professional gravity and air of command had their due effect; and it was a meek and fluttered patient who presently agreed to go straight up to bed and stay there.

"Only tell me what's the matter, Dr. Buford!" she wailed, stopping at the door, her hand on Luella's supporting arm, her face screwed to a knot between anxiety and curiosity. "If you don't tell me I shall think it's something dreadful."

"I don't want to alarm you unnecessarily," said the young man gravely. "The name sounds formidable, but the disease is not dangerous. Only you must keep perfectly quiet and avoid all excitement. It is Cacoethes loquendi, and—I fear—chronic."

Cacoethes loquendi," murmured Mrs. Thayer, moving feebly to the stairs, and chronic too! O dear! O dear!

Although Luella was not allowed to take entire care of her aunt, still she spent much of her time in the darkened front chamber, and what more natural than that Dr. Buford, being in charge of the case should see to it that she did not lose the roses from her cheeks in consequence?

When he drove out of the yard after his daily visit Luella was commonly beside him, looking very fresh and blooming, and, far from losing her color. Uncle Myron, who had returned from his trip, often remarked that she looked more like an apple-tree in full blow every day.

This had gone on for a week or two. Mrs. Thayer submitting to her imprisonment with unhelped-for patience, Luella smiling vaguely and turning very pink at sudden wheels on the gravelled drive, and Uncle Myron, who had strangely recovered from his first alarm, chuckling in the seclusion of the side porch, when, one day, half an hour or so after Tom's high-stepping mare and trim buggy had disappeared up the road, a sagging and rusty phaeton creaked to the door and old Dr. Barnes stepped heavily out.

"Why! Why! Why! What's this? What's this?" he sputtered, pausing on the threshold of the darkened room to survey Mrs. Thayer on her couch, supported by a mass of pillows and the table with its array of glasses and papers of white powder, before he seated himself beside her and laid his practised fingers upon her wrist.

It being an evident duty as well as a pleasure to put her doctor in full possession of the facts, Mrs. Thayer hastened to pour forth the tale of her feelings and symptoms to which the old man paid not the slightest attention. He was picking up some of the powder papers and emptying them upon his tongue.

"Doctor, you mustn't!" she cried, aghast.

"Tut, tut!" he replied. You don't suppose a little sugar will hurt me. I never saw you looking better in my life," he continued; "pulse normal, color fine. Haven't let you talk any for a spell back, have they? Guess the rest has done you good. What did you say your little Blue-Grass boy said was the matter with you?"

"I didn't say. You didn't give me a chance," responded Mrs. Thayer, rather loftily. It ain't any ordinary disease, doctor. It's Cacoethes loquendi, and it's chronic."

The doctor stared an instant, then burst into a roar of laughter. "Cacoethes—Good land! Have you any idea, ma'am—" Suddenly he stopped. He had crossed the room, panting, to throw open a window, and, just facing him in the deceptive seclusion of a sheltering tree, a buggy had drawn up, and the young doctor from Kentucky was lifting Luella tenderly to the ground. As the old man gazed, his laughter was subdued to a smile. He chuckled, drew down the shade abruptly and turned to face the puzzled lady.

"You're doing very well as you are," he said, summoning a professional frown. "Go on taking the —powders, and get up when—when Luella says you may."

"Luella, indeed! Much she knows about it!" cried her aunt, not at all pleased at being taken so lightly.

"How much does Luella know, I wonder?" thought the doctor, as he lumbered down the stairs.

When Tom's buggy drew up that afternoon, on the edge of the lawn, Luella was in a whirl of conflicting emotions. She was very happy. She was a little ashamed of being so happy. She was very sorry for poor Aunt

Minerva. She wanted to blame herself, yet she could not blame Tom. It was quite true what he said. How else could he ever have got to know her? And suppose those dreadful evenings had gone on and on—he and she sitting gazing at each other in silence, as if across a chasm, while Aunt Minerva talked—until tired out at last, like the rest, he had gone away. Suppose she had lost him! No, she could not blame Tom. But it did not seem as if she could face her aunt now, this minute, as Tom insisted. So she sat still in the buggy, and gently shook her head.

"It wasn't much of a fraud," he pleaded, smiling. "If an inordinate passion for talking isn't a disease, it's a vice and deserves worse than sugar powders. Just ask your uncle."

"Poor Uncle Myron!" murmured Luella.

"Come, faint heart never—good husband," he urged, holding out his arms. "Do you want me, Luella? Once for all!"

"Yes." "Well, then, come!" and so speaking, he lifted her to the ground, pausing half way—and thereby causing Dr. Barnes at the chamber window to pull down the shade abruptly.

As the young people turned slowly toward the house, the old doctor was getting into his phaeton at the side door.

"Cacoethes loquendi! You young dog! Cacoethes loquendi!" he roared out, shaking his fist at Tom, and a burst of Homeric laughter floated back as he drove away, mingled with the flapping of reins and the rattling of shabby wheels. "Well, I don't blame you!" he yelled in farewell, craning forward as the pony ambled through the gate. And Tom's frown relaxed into a grin.

"The old brick!" said Tom. "He hasn't told! Now, courage, little one Let's take the stairs on the run!"

"Well, well, who would have thought it? Little Luella!" quavered Aunt Minerva. "She's a good girl," she continued, patting Luella's hand fondly, "and she's good judgment, generally, if she is no hand to talk. But there," she added, turning to Tom, "I guess you can talk enough for both you and her too. And I s'pose," she added a trifle grimly, "it'll be quite a while yet

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before she gets tired hearing you—maybe as much as two years. Now, go down," she went on, while the pair exchanged a faint, guilty smile, "and send your Uncle Myron up here. Tell him I feel better and I'm going down to supper."

"I believe," whispered Luella, as she shut the door softly, "O, Tom, I do believe Aunt Minerva's been looking up Cacoethes loquendi in the dictionary!"

But if Mrs. Thayer had, no one ever knew it. The incident for all concerned was closed, although her "mania for talking" was noticeably checked from that time.—Helen Palmer, in The Youth's Companion.

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