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A DOSE; OR, WHAT DID SHE TAKE!

BY T. HOOD.

“Ellen, you have been out.”

“Well, I know I have.”

“To the King’s Head?”

“No, John, no. But no matter—You’ll be troubled no more with my drinking.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean what I say, John,” replied the wife, looking very serious, and speaking very solemnly and delicately, with a strong emphasis on every word. “You will be troubled no more with my drink—I have took it at last.”

“I knew it!” exclaimed the wretched husband, desperately tossing his arms aloft, as when all is lost. “I saw it!”—and leaving one coat flap in the hand of his wife, who vainly attempted to detain him, he rushed from the room—sprang down three stairs at a time—ran along the passage—and, without his hat or stick, dashed at the street door, sweeping from the step two ragged little girls, a quartern loaf, a basin of treacle, and a baby. He never stopped to see if the children were hurt, or even to see whether the infant dripped with gore or clashes. Away he ran like a rabid dog, straightforward down the street, heedless alike of porter’s load, baker’s cart, and butcher’s trap.

“Do that again, growled a placard man, as he reversed the pole and board which had been knocked from his shoulder.

“Mind where you’re goin’,” bawled a hawker, as he kicked up his scattered wares, while a dandy suddenly burst into a kennel launched after the runner one of those fatal missives which are said to return, like the booming, to those who launched them.

But on, on, scampered the teetotaler, heedless of all impediments—on he scoured, like the Camilla, to the

shop, numbered 240, with the red, blue, and green bottles in the window—the chemist’s and druggist’s, into which he darted, and up to the little bald man at the desk, with barely breath enough to gasp out “My wife!” “Poison!” and “Punch!”

“Vegetable or mineral?” inquired the surgeon apothecary, with professional coolness.

“Both—all sorts—laudanum—arsenic—oxalic acid—corrosive sublimity”—and the teetotaler was about to add pine-apple rum, among the poisons, when the Dr. stopped him.

“No!” But remembering the symptoms over night the teetotaler ventured to say, on the strength of his dream, that she was turning all manners of colours, like a rainbow, and swelling as big as a house.

“Then there is not a moment to lose,” said the Esculapius, and accordingly clapping on his hat, and arming himself with the necessary apparatus, a sort of elephantine syringe with a very long trunk—he set off on a trot, guided by the teetotaler, to unpoison the rash and ill-fated bacchanalian, Mrs. Burrage.

“And did he save her?”

“My dear madam, be contented to let the issue remain a little, and accumulate interest, like a sum in the saving’s bank.”

Now, when the teetotaler, with the medical man at his heels, arrived at his own house, Mrs. Burrage was still in her bedroom, which was a great convenience, but before she could account for the intrusion of a stranger, nay, even without knowing how it was done, she found herself seated in the easy chair; and when she attempted to expostulate, she felt herself choking with the tube of something, which was certainly neither Maccaroni nor stick-liquorice, nor yet peppermint.

To account for this precipitancy, the exaggerated representation of her husband must be born in mind; and if his wife did not exhibit all the colors that he had described—if she was not quite so blue, green, yellow, or black, as he had painted her, the apothecary made sure she would soon be, and consequently went to work without delay, where delays were so dangerous.

Mrs. Burrage, however, was not a woman to submit quietly to a disagreeable operation, against her own consent? so with a vigorous kick and push, at the same time, she contrived to rid herself at once of the doctor and his instrument, and indignantly demanded to know the meaning of the assault upon her.

“It’s to save your life—your precious life, Ellen,” said the teetotaler, very solemnly.

“It’s to empty your stomach, ma’am,” said the doctor.