

BETSY TIBBITS' CHEMICALIZATION.

BETSY TIBBITS had gained a partial victory over death. She could never be taken unawares by that conqueror. Few and unimportant were the diseases she had not experienced in some form or other, and these, had they been worth counting, Betsy would have had. Heart disease, she felt convinced, would carry her off most any day. She went into a decline bi-ennially, and was, by way of always having on hand a disagreeable chronic ailment, a nervo-billious-dyspeptic. When it was not heart or lungs she could always fall back on her liver, which, with remarkable elasticity, was inflamed, congested or torpid, as the case might require. All the while B. C. Tibbits was as fresh and lean and round as a winter apple.

Hozia Tibbits, through love for his wife, bore, bravely and speechlessly, huge bills for drugs, paid one hundred and fifty dollars for a complete magnetic suit, which increased Betsy's proportions to such an extent that she looked like the fat woman of some respectable side show retired from active life. With the herb doctor of humble school she had begun, and thus far "massage" was her craze. She had worn out the "histogenetic" system of things, now would she stop here? Yes, unless propitious heaven invent and speedily send some newer and better alleged cura.

"Law! but Betsy don't seem satisfied, nohow, 'less she's a-doctorin' one way or t'other. I'm about beginnin' to think she'll hev to put up with the old allopath after all," soliloquized Hozia Tibbits, as, pitchfork in hand, he wandered home to tea.

"Betsy," he chuckled to himself, "hev been uncommon idle lately, leastaways regardin' 'er precious health. She's a-bidin' her time, though, an' 'll break out with a new disease, sooner or later, unheard of afore." By this time he had reached the house, and sat down upon the front stoop to cool off and to wait for the supper bell to ring. "Well, Bet am mighty long about handin' out them vittles maybe she's really took in a fit this time, an' ef she don't get well or die afore long we're a ruined community, an' that's what I've told her time an' time agin."

Five, ten, then fifteen minutes went by, and still no supper seemed ready or likely to be. Receiving no answer to his repeated calls, he strode into the house to inquire into the cause of such an unusual proceeding. The house was empty, and he muttered to himself: "Mam ain't been so peart as usual lately, what ef she hev gone insane an' drowned?" and gulping down a sob, he hurried out of the house and over to the nearest neighbor's. It was a trifle embarrassing, this wife hunting, but he bore the situation bravely and said: "Hes my wife been here to see you'uns to-day, Mis' Whiteline?"

"No, Mr. Tibbits, I hain't seen your Betsy for nigh onter three days; hain't even so much as ketched a sight of her. There's been sewin' society down to Sam Purday's; likely enough she's there."

"Well," said Hozia, with a sickly attempt at joviality, "good evenin'," and straightway down to Sam Purday's went the disconsolate benedict.

He knocked, the door was opened, and he inquired, rather faintly: "Is Mis' Tibbits here, Sis' Purday?"

"No, she hesn't been here to-day, nor for the last three or four meetin's. But won't ye come in, Brother Tibbits; Sarah Cramer hes dropped in with her triplets, an' she's showin' 'em off now, an' they do say as how she's goin' to call the biggest one arter you."

"Law, now, ye don't say! Well, the little creetur shell hev the finest silver mug I kin find in Boggs-ville; but I be entirely too consarned about mam to stop long, Mis' Purday, an' it's hard to git off from the women folks, we all know."

But before he could take his final departure, a dozen female heads, of every color and degree of comeliness, were thrust out over Mrs. Purday's shoulders, and in twelve different keys of the female "voice divine" Mr. Tibbits heard—

"Goodness me, Mr. Tibbits, don't yer know where your wife is?"

"That's exactly the kind of a fix I'm in this here present moment. Mam hain't been home an' got supper yit, an' here I'm a-rampagin' around this time o' night to find her."

Each turned and looked at the other inquiringly, but no face seemed to beam with the desired intelligence. But each woman was eager to advance some theory that should explain the strange occurrence. One said that "Ole Mother Egolf was bedsick, an' maybe she'd gone to tend her." Still another thought "she'd gone down to see the folks at the mill." But as one after another spoke, Hozia seemed inclined to discredit them all. At last, one old woman spoke up and said—

"As some of the ladies was a-talkin' of goin' down to call on them new-fangled doctors as was come to town."

Knowing Betsy's failing, as they all did, a faint titter went around, that Hozia was too busy thinking to notice.

"What school is them doctors?" asked Hozia.

"No regular school, Mr. Tibbits, only a independent kind of canterin' off. The sign my husband seen hed 'Christian Science' writ' on it, an' he heard another man say as how they was a perfession to cure every last disease under the sun, jest prayin'."

"What nonsense," said Hozia, "but I can't go fer to think mam is down there. Don't ye know nothin' particular about them folks' perfessions?"