

The minister's wife, the most intelligent of them all, stepped forward and said: "I know a little bit about it, deacon, for when I was over at Spearstown, just before we came here, there was some of the same kind of doctors there, and my very next door neighbor was treating with them. I used to hear her say a lot about 'beliefs in disease' and such expressions, and when her youngest was taken down with the scarletina she kept calling it his 'chemicalization.' I remembered that, it being such a queer word, and we've had lots of arguments on that very thing. But I know that when her Johnnie got real bad her husband just up and said his wife might go experimenting and fooling around, but he wasn't going to sit by and see his boy killed. They always say you're having your chemicalization if you have a set back, and they're great for having all the big words in and out of the dictionary for their use."

"Deacon Tibbits, it's 'most dark now, and ef ye want to find yer Betsy ye'd better be a-gittin'," spoke up one woman, jealous of the prolonged monologue the preacher's wife had heretofore maintained.

"Reckon I had," said Hozia, "I have stopped too long already," and amid a general farewell, each one trying to get in the last word, and some natural embarrassment on Hozia's part, he started off.

He muttered, "Them was curious things she told about, an' no mistake, but I won't go fer to believe Betsy Cornelia hev been imposed onto that fur."

He hastened briskly down the street, around the corner and up the steps of a stone house, directly even with the street. He lifted the iron knocker and brought it down with considerable force on the panneling. It was answered by his cousin Ebenezer Hinks, who lifted an astonished face to Hozia's perplexed one.

"Eb, is Betsy here?"

"No, ain't my wife to your house?"

The two deserted husbands stood looking at one another for fully two minutes, Ebenezer being the first to speak.

"Marier, she went over to your house about half past three, with her new perlese an' bunnit on. Them two women has been confabbin', an' where do ye suppose they're gone to?"

"Pears to me, Eb, we'uns hed better be a-findin' out; it air most dark now, an' I don't like to have them two women galavantin' around so late at night. Besides that, I hain't hed no supper yet to-night."

"Well, Hozia, ef you be so worried about your Betsy I'll go along, but I'm about thinkin' Marier's about equal match fer any coke-burnin' loafer, ef that's what ye mean. Ef they meets her, Hozia, ef they meets her, an' ef they sarses up to her, Hozia, my sympathies air with the men," and Ebenezer

chuckled to himself in very much the same manner that a sly and posted better backs the winning filly.

The two men started off in the same direction. They passed Mr. Tibbits' house, but all was dark and comfortless, for the late August twilight had deepened into night.

"Hozia, this is the biggest wild goose chase I ever hearn tell of. Betsy is with Marier, an' trust Marier fer a-pilotin' of her home safe."

"As fur as that's concerned, Ebenezer, Betsy kin take care of herself, ef she ain't in one of her spells, an' they air like to come on most any time."

While they had been talking they had reached a square where four roads diverged, and Ebenezer stopped.

"Hozia, which way are ye goin'?" he demanded, when, suddenly, a brilliant thought struck Hozia, judging from his face, which shone as if inspired.

"Ebenezer, I hev it; mam's got a new disease—mam's took—an' there's my hand on it."

Ebenezer Hinks looked knowing, assented, but still did not seem to think the theory threw much light upon the subject. He waited for Hozia to speak, for he never rushed matters. Maria was the motive power, Hinks was the machinery, and he knew it. Habit, then, made him always look to others for the initiative.

"Eb, do ye want to know where Betsy Cornelia is, surer 'n shootin'? She's down to them Christian doctors. There was some sense in what them chatterin' women said—more sense than usual."

"Christian doctors! Ef Betsy hain't the liveliest case to hunt up them doctors! But I call that a downright blasphemy, I do. Er be they anything like ministers of the gospil, a-curin' of souls an' the like?"

"'Tain't that, Ebenezer, 'tain't that, but they're a prayin' institution though. I've heard as how they was come to town, an' ye mark my words, Betsy hain't lost no time a-findin' of 'em out."

As there was only one main street, the doctor's house must be somewhere on that street, and, guided by that certain knowledge, they hastened down toward town. Just as they had reached the vicinity of the big hotel, Hozia, who was considerably in the lead, stopped suddenly and began to scratch a match, with great reverence, upon his pantaloons. Ebenezer hastened to join him, and by the tiny light of the match, passed backward and forward over a small wooden sign nailed to the front of the house, they were able to make out this inscription, painted in rather small characters—

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE DOCTORS.

Gains Large. Fees Small.

Come ye that are athirst, and drink of the water of life.