

DIGBY'S REFORM CLUB.

There was a quartette of free and jovial spirits in Burville, and Johnny Digby was the acknowledged leader thereof.

On a certain Monday evening they were assembled in a small parlor of Lushton's tavern for the purpose of having a good time, as they were wont to assemble often.

At the early stage of the wassail, before sense had been submerged, Peter Slade suggested that he had a complaint to make against one of the dignitaries of the town, and thereupon he opened his vials of denunciation against Parson Meekly, the old clergyman of the place.

"As near as I can find out," said he, "the parson just about the same as called us by name and held us up as a set of graceless scamps."

"Not quite so bad as that," said John Digby. "He did certainly allude to us very plainly, but the worst he brought against us was that we were prostituting noble powers and opportunities to base and sinful purposes."

"Flattering with a vengeance," said Tom Lowden. "What business is it of his?"

"Aye," exclaimed Sam Pepper, "what business is it of his? And then look at the hullabaloo they make over this foreign mission business. It was in connection with that that Parson Meekly attacked us. They'd better look to home. I think there is suffering enough under our very noses that had better be looked to first."

"That's so," cried Slade. "I say charity begins at home. What do you say, John?"

John Digby had listened attentively, and during the conversation he had turned his glass bottom side up on the table.

"There may be truth in what you say," said he, slowly and thoughtfully, "but people who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. We may object to furnishing money for these foreign missions on the plea that charity begins at home, and all that; but the question may come back, what have we done for this charity at home?"

"What have we done toward alleviating the distress of the poor of our town? And if we have not done anything in that direction—if we don't open our hand in charity at all—what right have we to say in what direction others shall aim their good works?"

Blank were the looks that greeted this speech. The trio of listeners were taken back. They hadn't expected this from their leader.

"Now look here, boys," continued John Digby, pushing his inverted glass away to the center of the table, and leaving it there, "I don't like this overhauling that Parson Meekly gave us any better than you do, and I propose to shut him up."

"Hy-yah!" shouted Sam Pepper; "that's the talk. I'm with you."

"Are you sure you've got the courage, Sam?"

"Yes, sir."

"Count me in," said Tom.

"And me," added Peter. "Let's shut the old fellow up. What's the program, Jack?"

"Well," answered Digby, "I have planned that we shall take the wind out of Parson Meekly's sails by establishing a reform club of our own, and starting a missionary society on the same basis."

"Eh?"

"Look ye, boys; people beside the parson are talking hard about us, and we'll shut them all up in a lump. I'd like to hit back in the most effective way. I'd like to make them take the back track here in Burville, in their own business."

His hearers were interested and all listened eagerly.

"What is it? Tell us how this is to be done?"

"Have you all got the courage to do it?" asked Jack.

"We'll follow you," said Peter Shade.

"Honor bright?"

"Yes."

"Then listen."

"Hold on," cried Sam Pepper. "Let's fill up before we commence."

"Not with old Lushton's 'Tom and Jerry,'" returned Jack. "We shall want the cost of it for another purpose. Turn the glasses upside down, for the present. Now listen. We are in the habit of meeting here at the tavern three evenings in each week; and our expenses for liquors and cigars are at least \$2 an evening, ain't they?"

This was admitted by a nod.

"And in addition to this I spend at least one dollar more a week for beer and tobacco, on my own hook. How is it with you?"

The others admitted that one dollar a week was little enough.

"Thus," resumed Digby, "we have \$10 a week as the result of our combined and individual expenses for rum and tobacco. I, for one, think I could manage to live through the rest of the winter without any more of it; and for the sake of the experiment I would be willing to put my share of that \$10 to charitable uses. Here it is, the beginning of December, and the winter has opened hard. There are poor families not far away which we can bless with our sympathy and help. We might organize a benevolent society or a missionary society on our own hook. Do you begin to understand?"

They understood him perfectly, and since he would lead they would follow.

In fact, they rather liked the idea. There was a charm of novelty and originality about it that captivated them. It would be fun to purchase flour and meat and tea and sugar and fuel, and go around to assist the poor and needy. They were young men, full of life and good feeling, and had caroused only because of the fun of the thing. Here was the promise of fun in another direction, and they would go in for it.

The matter was discussed and finally settled. They would make a square week of it at the beginning.

"During the week," said Jack, "we will look up the cases of destitution and suffering, and on next Saturday we will meet and compare notes. Then we will take our \$10 and do what we can for those who are suffering most. We must be methodical in this. We are not to spend a penny in this work of charity that is not saved by cutting off some useless expenditure of our own; and he of us who buys a cigar during the week shall deduct it from his contribution on Saturday."

"If we should be methodical," suggested Peter,

"we must organize. I say if we are going to do anything of this kind, let us do it ship-shape."

Peter's proposition was unanimously accepted, and they proceeded to organize.

The organization was simple, but nevertheless effective. They elected John Digby to serve as president, secretary and treasurer; and then they elected an executive committee of four, consisting of John Digby, Peter Shade, Tom Lowden and Sam Pepper.

And then they settled their bill at the bar and went home.

Saturday evening came, and the reform club met at Digby's shop, and each member was ready with his report. They were sober and thoughtful. They had thought when they separated on Monday evening they should meet with a spirit of frolic in their new work; but the scenes which they had witnessed in the interim had changed the current of their feelings entirely.

"My soul!" exclaimed Sam Pepper; "I never dreamed what sorrow and suffering there was right here in our little town. Last night I went to the Widow Bashlow's, and I found her with a sick child, absolutely starving and freezing."

"And I," said Tom Lowden, "found poor Uncle Ben Driscoll and his wife in the same plight. The old man is down with rheumatism; and when he and Aunt Sally sat and cried like babies, with fear of going to the poor-house, I tell you it brought the tears to my eyes."

And so the reports were made, and then they planned how they could best use their \$10. It seemed like a drop in the bucket, when set against all the wants and suffering they had found, but it would do something.

On Saturday evening Widow Bashlow bent over the bed of the sick child, with weeping and wails of anguish. The howling blasts piped without, and the frost nipped within. She suffered because she had forced herself to beg. For herself she had rather die than become a pauper, but for her child—"O God, have mercy!"

A wailing cry like this had burst from her lips, when a tramping at her door attracted her attention, and presently a gentle tap followed. She answered the summons, and found four young men upon her stoop.

She knew them well, for they had been school-mates with her son who had gone to sea and never returned. And they went into the house; they piled up the fuel on the hearth until the bright flames leaped and roared, and the sick child reached out its wasted arms to embrace the genial warmth.

They brought out bread, tea, sugar, butter and cheese.

"All right," said Sam Pepper, who regarded these as his special charges, in answer to the woman's ejaculations of astonishment. "We are John Digby's reform club, and we are going into the missionary work; and such folks as you are we want to convert—want to convert from suffering to comfort, if we can. So keep up a good heart and let us do for you what your own Willie would have done if he had lived. It'll be a comfort to us. We'll call often; you shan't want for anything if we can help it."

The widow's sobbing, bursting return of blessings cannot be reproduced by tongue or pen. When the young men reached the highway, Sam Pepper burst forth:

"Boys, as true as Heaven, I would not exchange the blessings of that poor widow's heart for all the joy that ever came in the old way at the tavern. There's something more than fun in this."

And his companions agreed with him.

In another part of the town, on the outskirts of the village, in a poor thatched hut, lived Ben Driscoll and his wife.

In other years they had been well and happy; and, though never forehanded, yet they had never known want till old age and sickness had deprived them of their ability to work. And on this cold winter's night Uncle Ben and Aunt Sally sat and shivered over the heat of such stuff as they had been able to gather from the snow-covered hedges, and the old man sighed as he thought of the almshouse.

"If we could only get through the winter. But who can help us?"

And old Uncle Ben and his wife were aroused from their stupor of chill and hunger by the tramp of feet and the hum of voices; and shortly the door opened and John Digby and his companions entered.

A fire was speedily burning on the hearth, and a good store of provisions was opened out on the table.

The old man wondered and Tom Lowden made answer:

"It's all right, Uncle Ben. This is Jack Digby's reform club. We've stopped our rations of spirits and tobacco and are going to invest the result in a missionary enterprise. We want to convert you and Aunt Sally, if we can."

"Convert us, Tom?"

"Aye—convert you to comfort and peace; and perhaps, convert you to the belief that there's a grain of good in humanity still. We mean to take you in hand this winter and you shan't suffer if we can help it."

The boys did not leave the cot until they had helped the aged couple to a hearty meal and had piled up fuel enough to last until they came again; and when they finally withdrew, the song of their blessing was sounding in their ears.

And so the reformers went on until their night's work was done, and when they came to separate they declared that they had found such enjoyment as they had never known before.

During the succeeding week three new members were added to the club—men who were willing to cut off expenses for rum and tobacco, and devote the proceeds to the relief of the poor and distressed of the town.

And ere long Digby's reform club became a noted institution at that place. The projectors could hardly credit the evidence of their senses in contemplating the result of their three months' labor. Two and twenty members had joined, and the fund of relief amounted to nearly \$40 a week, and each man was pledged to pay in weekly the exact sum his spirits and tobacco cost him. If he continued the use of tobacco he took a lower place in the company, and the use of spirits as a beverage was sufficient cause for expulsion. When the people saw the good that was being done they were anxious to give their aid, and be connected with the merry crew; but the laws of the club were fixed; no money could come to its fund except such had been saved by the donor from some evil habit or cutting off some useless luxury.

It was a bright Sabbath in the Spring-time, and it had been given out that Parson Meekly was going to preach a sermon upon Digby's reform club. The old meeting-house was filled to overflowing. The clergyman read his text from St. John's gospel. "Can there be any good come out of Nazareth? Come, and see." And when he had told the story

of Digby's reform club, and pictured the good results of its labors, he proclaimed to all, "Go, ye, and do likewise."

Once John Digby and his companions had fancied it would be a proud moment when they had brought the old parson to recognize the worth of their labor; but the blessings of those upon whom their bounties had fallen had made such a sweet music in their ears, and the satisfaction of duties truly done had dropped so soothingly upon their souls, that they found no room for that baser pride which they before that time had anticipated.

CURRENT DRIFT.

The apple and the small boy demonstrate cores and effect.

It is the clean table-cloth that catches the early grease spot.

It is cruelty to cast your bread upon the waters if the bread is sour and heavy. It might give the fishes the dyspepsia.

Reputation is to a man what chaff is to the kernel. It may cover genuine gold or it may hide only a shrunken, valueless article.

Education is the corner-stone of liberty. That government presents the most perfect type of liberty which ever seeks to educate its subjects.

The Mikado of Japan is to have a new palace at Yeddo, which will cost \$5,600,000. Mike has evidently had some American contractor figure on the job.

A girl received a reward of \$10 from her father for climbing a church steeple at Saranac, Mich., standing on the knob, and cheering for Colonel Ingersoll.

An Albany woman woke her husband during a storm the other night and said: "I do wish you would stop that snoring, for I want to hear it thunder."

"Can you read, my girl?" said a lady, patronizingly, to a waitress in a New England mountain hotel. "Yes, ma'am—in seventeen languages," was the answer.

"I saw two beings in the hues of youth."—Byron. One was telling the old, old story as he swung on the garden gate; the other wrestled playfully with a stick of chewing gum.

If it makes a white woman bewitching to stick a piece of black court-plaster on her face, why would not a piece of white court-plaster make a black woman positively charming?

The "utterly utter" kind of talk has infected the street gamins, one of whom, after picking up a more than usually fragrant cigar stump, exclaimed to his friend, "Jack, this is quite too positively bully."

Here's a positive fact that occurred in one of the public schools in this city recently: A small boy was asked to name some part of his own body. He thought a moment and then replied: "Bowels, which are five in number—a, e, i, o and u, and sometimes w and y."—Philadelphia Bulletin.

Young man, beware of stock and grain speculations. If you want an "option" that is safe, get the option to the hand of a good sensible girl of marriageable age, and put up a lot and a neat little cottage as a margin. It will be the grandest speculation you ever made, and it will bring you big profits. You can stake your last dollar on that and be safe.—Burlington Hawkeye.

Young Maloney de Smith, who exterminates melody with a fiddle, to old Colonel Northcote—"Colonel, you must be on hand to-night at the De Smith mansion. I want you to hear some really good music. I will give a few solos on the violin to a few invited guests, and afterward, at 8 o'clock, we will have some refreshments—oysters, wine, cigars." "My dear boy, I will be on hand a little after 8. Rely on me."—Gazette.

Said Mrs. Younghusband: "Charley, why is it you never talk with me as you did before we were married? I notice that you talk fast enough with other women." "Dearest," he replied, without taking his eyes off the newspaper, "don't you know that people talk to conceal their thoughts? I have nothing to conceal from you, love." In another moment he was deep in the stock market reports, while something that sounded very much like "humbbug" trembled on the lips of the wife as she slowly left the room.—Boston Transcript.

Rescued from Death.

The following statement of William J. Coughlin, of Somerville, Mass., is so remarkable that we beg to ask for it the attention of our readers. He says: "In the Fall of 1876 I was taken with a violent bleeding of the lungs, followed by a severe cough. I soon began to lose my appetite and flesh. I was so weak at one time that I could not leave my bed. In the Summer of 1877 I was admitted to the City Hospital. While there the doctors said I had a hole in my left lung as big as a half dollar. I expended over \$100 in doctors and medicines. I was so far gone at one time that a report went around that I was dead. I gave up hope, but a friend told me of Dr. Wm. Hall's Balsam for the Lungs. I laughed at my friends, thinking that my case was incurable; but I got a bottle to satisfy them, when to my surprise and gratification I commenced to feel better. My hope, once dead, began to revive, and to-day I feel in better spirits than I have for the past three years. I write this hoping you will publish it, so that every one afflicted with diseased lungs will be induced to take Dr. Wm. Hall's Balsam for the Lungs, and be convinced that consumption can be cured. I have taken two bottles, and can positively say that it has done more good than all the other medicines I have taken since my sickness. My cough has almost entirely disappeared, and I shall soon be able to go to work." Sold by druggists.

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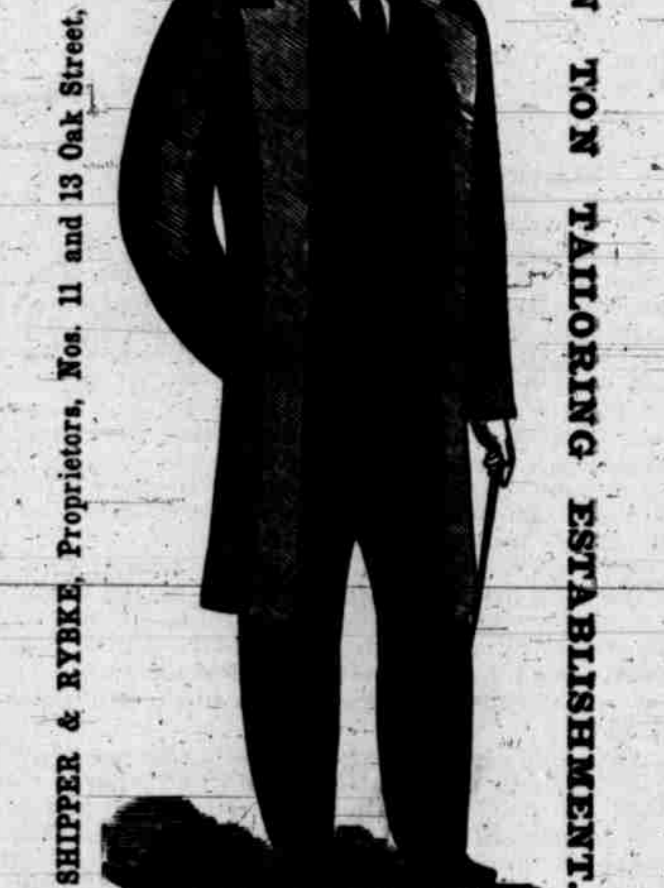
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