

From the Portfolio of a Lawyer
A Diseased Heart Cured

The days of my clerkship were ended; my examination was over; I admitted to the practice of the law; wrote myself "Nehemiah Hubbs, attorney," put up my bright little sign, and in my native village began my professional career. No I did not either. I am mistaken. I *intended* to pursue the honorable profession to which I had dedicated my talents and learning, in the place of my birth; but never was a truer word penned than the time-honored proverb, "A prophet has no honor in his own country." I believe if I had remained in the village of Green Briar till my head was white, they would have thought of me as nothing but a boy, and would have feared to trust me. Even after my sign was put up, nobody called me *Mr. Hubbs*; it was still '*Ne.*' with old and young, and '*Ne.*' I would have remained to this day, had I remained in Green Briar. Only one case claimed my attention during three months of patient continuance in Green Briar, after being admitted to the bar, and that was the case of an unjustly impounded pig, "feloniously abstracted, your honor, from the small but secure spot in which my client had trustingly deposited him, and maliciously driven to the public enclosure called a pond, for the vile purpose, doubtless, of compelling my client, in his poverty and destitution, to pay the enormous fee that has been demanded of him, in order to extricate the animal from his unpleasant position, and restore him to the bosom of his family." —By this I meant the client's family, the pig having none of his own; it was a figure of speech, undoubtedly, the family not inhabiting an Irish Cabin; but still it rounded off the period, and sounded well to me as I repeated over and over again my maiden speech pacing up and down the floor at my little office. In this, my first case, I was successful, so far as to rescue the impounded animal, and save my client from the payment of an unjust demand; but it brought no silver to my pocket—neither, to my surprise, did it bring honor to my name. The eloquence of my speech did not form the theme, as I proudly hoped it would, of paragraphs in the village papers, or of discussion at the corners of the streets; neither did it bring to my office the rush of clients for which daily I vainly made ready. It was plain that I should never raise to distinction in Green Briar, and so I came to the sudden determination to remove from that pleasant spot, and settle in some city where nobody knew or heard of me; and where, above all, there was not a soul to call me '*Ne.*'

There I was more successful, and soon had the opportunity of forming a very advantageous partnership; business increased; money began to come in, slow at first, but after a time more plentifully, and all things seemed prosperous in my outward circumstances. But alas! as we are so often told poetically, there is no sweet without its bitter, no rose without its thorn; and trouble came to me in the shape of disease, insidious, and slow in its approaches at first, long feared and suspected, but at length betrayed itself so plainly, that I could blind myself no longer to the truth. Yes! I was, without a doubt, a victim to the disease of the heart; not metaphorically, dear reader, for never had the organ bent with a quicker pulsation at the approach of mortal woman; so far as the gentle sex was concerned I was a perfect strole; but there was organic disease about my heart, I could not doubt, and if ever the symptoms disclosed themselves unmistakably, they did so in my case. There was a fluttering palpitation, irregular action, and at length pain. I could not work; life had lost its zest; the fear of sudden

death was ever with me; I could enjoy nothing. If I had anything to leave, or anybody to leave it to, I should have made my will, for I was quite sure now that I should drop some day lifeless in the street, or that the morning would soon come when the power to rise from my bed would have left me.

I remained in my boarding house, and found no comfort in anything by my segar, and my dreadful disease grew worse and worse. As yet I had consulted no physician, partly I think from the apprehension of having my fears confirmed; but as I sat by my window, one day, smoking as vigorously as ever, gazing abstractly across the street, my attention was arrested by a modest little sign upon an opposite blind, "C.L. Todd, M.D." While thinking whether or not it would be best to make trial of a physician's skill, a sudden twinge and flutter decided me; yes I would send for Dr. Todd, and know the worst at once. Summoning the only male servant belonging to the establishment, I told him to step over and ask Dr. Todd to come and see me as soon as possible. The boy grinned.

"What are you laughing at," asked I, "is not Dr. Todd a good physician?"

"Oh yes, sir," he replied, "I believe she is a very good physician, but she hain't never tended nobody here."

She! said I to myself, the boy surely has Welch blood in his veins; they always sho everybody.

The boy returned, saying: "The doctor wasn't home, sir, but I left your name on the slate."

In the course of the afternoon, as I lay upon the sofa, with my hand pressed upon my head, to still its irregular pulsations, there was a soft tap at my door. Come in, I called out, and to my surprise in came the neatest, brightest, most cheerful looking little woman it had ever been my lot to meet.

"You sent for me, I believe, sir!" she said in a brisk, pleasant way.

"I? No madam, you are laboring under a mistake."

"Ah! I beg your pardon," said the little woman, "I found on my slate the name of Mr. Hubbs, number fourteen, Mrs. Gray's boarding house, with a request that I would call and see him."

"Your slate, madam!" I exclaimed, my astonishment increasing every moment; "you surely are not a—"

"Physician! yes, sir," she interrupted, —"I'm a physician, Dr. Todd."

"Extraordinary!" was all I could say, for although I had heard at a distance of the existence of such beings, this was my first introduction to a female practitioner of the Esculapian art. It was rather awkward, but since she had come I determined to make the best of it, and acquaint the

lady with my case. She felt my pulse, asked numerous questions as to my symptoms, and then in her quick, bright way, exclaimed:

“Nervous! nervous! that’s all, depend upon it. Excuse me, sir, but by the air of your room, I suppose that you are much given to smoking.”

I plead guilty.

“And how many segars do you usually smoke in a day?”

I could not tell; never counted; as soon as I threw away one I took another usually.

“Hem! a segar in your mouth pretty much all the time, eh? Chew, too?”

Again a reluctant confession was wrung from me.

“I presume you sit up late, smoking all the time?”

“Yes, ma’am, smoking and reading.”

“That’s it. No disease of the heart at all sir; nothing but tobacco. It will make you fancy anything; it’ll drive you crazy, if you don’t take care. Now will you promise to follow my advice closely? If not, I will take my leave immediately.”

I promised, submissive as a lamb.

“in the first place, then, throw away all your segars and tobacco, and promise to buy no more.”

With a sigh given to my sole consolations, I said I would do as she directed. Many more directions she gave me as to diet, exercise, early hours, etc. Perhaps she saw, too, that cheerful companionship was something I needed, so she remained awhile, talking with great glee and spirit about matters and things in general; and promising to call and see me next morning, she left. I had not felt so well in a great while; indeed, I had not given my heart a thought since the little woman had entered the room.

The next morning I found myself watching impatiently for the arrival of my little doctor. She came, bright and cheerful as the day before. What a perfect little sunbeam she was! I could not help growing better under her care and the influence of her cheering presence, and yet I managed to contrive some ache or pain every day, as an excuse for the continuance of her visits.

At length I found that my heart, which had long been quiet, and apparently free from disease, began to flutter and palpitate again; but I observed it was only when I heard the little woman’s tap at my door, or felt her soft fingers on my wrist. In short as she had driven the disease out of

my heart that little woman had herself walked into it. I could no longer blind myself to the fact; and when she one day told me that was now off the sick list and out of her hands, I determined that she should not so easily get out of mine. So I told her that as she had now given ease to my heart in one respect, she must not leave till she had done so in another, or I should be worse off than I was before. The little woman looked perplexed. Then I stated my case and explained my symptoms a second time, showing her the distressed state of my heart, and she alone could cure it. The former disease she had removed by an occasional visit—the latter could only be cured by her promising to come and take up her abode with me as a resident physician. She understood me, and by the way she pressed her hand on her own little fluttering heart, one would have thought the disease was contagious, and I verily think it was. So now we are determined to cure each other, and next we are both to apply to a clergyman, who is to form between us a life partnership as lawyer and physician.

But one thing troubles me, of which I had no thought till now: that is, it is necessary to have our cards engraved. Married people are usually, "Mr. and Mrs. so and so," or "Mr. such a one and lady;" but will any one please to tell me how I and my little wife are to be designated? Will it be "Mr. and Mrs. Dr. Hubbs," or "Mr. and Mrs. Hubbs, M.D." or as the ladies are going ahead so fast in these days of Woman's Rights, will I sink into still lesser insignificance, and shall we be "Dr. Todd and gentleman," or must I drop the name of Hubbs altogether, and become a Todd, too? Somebody please tell me how to have these cards engraved.

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