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A Man of Genius

Mr. John Dubois, who lives near Sedalia, Missouri, is a genius. Like geniuses in general, though, he is said to be more great than good, having apparently somewhat worn and impaired the grindstone of his morality in giving a keen edge to his intellect. It is solemnly declared to be illustrated in his daily walk and conversation that Mr. Dubois is distinctly bad. In evidence of this we feel it our duty as a public censor of morals to relate a particular instance which is believed to prove his unworthy, not in resentment, but in the hope that it may serve as a warning to others.

A few weeks ago, it seems. Mr. Dubois, who is married to a most amiable and estimable woman, happened by some strange mischance to be driving (or in the Missouri vernacular, “buggy-riding”) with a lady whose identity has not been ascertained. The road was an unfrequented one, through a forest, and the solitude becoming fatiguing the pair drove a little way from the roadside and rested under a tree. There Mr. Dubois so far forgot his obligations to the wife of his bosom as to bestow upon his companion what one of the local historians mysteriously calls “a rousing smack” (The precise nature of the rite, or ceremony, designated as the “rousing smack” is unknown to “The Examiner,” but evidently it is considered in Missouri an infraction of the moral code under such circumstances as these.) At the conclusion of the “smack” Mr. Dubois had the unhappiness to observe the presence of a witness—an elderly maiden of his acquaintance, who was herself driving along that unfrequented road. This lady was not only an intimate friend of Mrs. Dubois, but was renowned in all that region as a sower of tares in the wheat-field of domestic happiness—a disturber of conjugal peace. The situation was alarming!

Mr. Dubois was equal to the emergency. No sooner was the elderly virgin out of sight than he drive rapidly into town by another route, got rid of the partner of his indiscretion—the “rousing-smackee”—and was soon at his own home, “Maria,” he said to his wife, “I have been driving about on business, but it is so fine a day I thought you might care to ride. It is very lonesome driving all alone.” Maria did indeed care to ride, and thanked Fortune that she had so good and thoughtful a husband. In a short time that vehicle, with its new occupant, was again traversing the unfrequented road. Again it loitered at some little distance from the wayside under a tree, and again was performed the mysterious rite of the “rousing smack.” Mrs. Dubois was in transports; that ceremony (whatever its nature) was not to her, it seems, an everyday experience, and it brought with it something of the charm of the days that were no more when she and John were lovers.

The denouement of this veracious story is obvious. When the elderly virgin arrived at the Dubois dwelling with her dreadful tale it fell very flat. Mrs. Dubois smilingly explained that she was herself the smackee, and then with a dignity born of her new happiness and pride intimated that one of the purposes of a door was for egress of mischief-makers. Wherefore we repeat that

Mr. John Dubois is a genius; and if his moral worth were equal to his intellectual resources (a proposition which, for some reason, the local press is indisposed to admit), the sovereign commonwealth of Missouri should be proud of him.