ROBERT BARR

IN THE MIDST OF ALARMS

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THE END.

TO E.B.

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CHAPTER I.

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In the marble-floored vestibule of the Metropolitan Grand Hotel in Buffalo, Professor Stillson Renmark stood and looked about him with the anxious manner of a person unused to the gaudy splendor of the modern American house of entertainment. The professor had paused halfway between the door and the marble counter, because he began to fear that he had arrived at an inopportune time, that something unusual was going on. The hurry and bustle bewildered him.

An omnibus, partly filled with passengers, was standing at the door, its steps backed over the curbstone, and beside it was a broad, flat van, on which stalwart porters were heaving great square, iron-bound trunks belonging to commercial travelers, and the more fragile, but not less bulky, saratogas, doubtless the property of the ladies who sat patiently in the omnibus. Another vehicle which had just arrived was backing up to the curb, and the irate driver used language suitable to the occasion; for the two restive horses were not behaving exactly in the way he liked.

A man with a stentorian, but monotonous and mournful, voice was filling the air with the information that a train was about to depart for Albany, Saratoga, Troy, Boston, New York, and the East. When he came to the words “the East,” his voice dropped to a sad minor key, as if the man despaired of the fate of those who took their departure in that direction. Every now and then a brazen gong sounded sharply; and one of the negroes who sat in a row on a bench

along the marble-paneled wall sprang forward to the counter, took somebody’s handbag, and disappeared in the direction of the elevator with the newly arrived guest following him. Groups of men stood here and there conversing, heedless of the rush of arrival and departure around them.

Before the broad and lofty plate-glass windows sat a row of men, some talking, some reading, and some gazing outside, but all with their feet on the brass rail which had been apparently put there for that purpose. Nearly everybody was smoking a cigar. A lady of dignified mien came down the hall to the front of the counter, and spoke quietly to the clerk, who bent his well-groomed head deferentially on one side as he listened to what she had to say. The men instantly made way for her. She passed along among them as composedly as if she were in her own drawing room, inclining her head slightly to one or other of her acquaintances, which salutation was gravely acknowledged by the raising of the hat and the temporary removal of the cigar from the lips.

All this was very strange to the professor, and he felt himself in a new world, with whose customs he was not familiar. Nobody paid the slightest attention to him as he stood there among it all with his satchel in his hand. As he timidly edged up to the counter, and tried to accumulate courage enough to address the clerk, a young man came forward, flung his handbag on the polished top of the counter, metaphorically brushed the professor aside, pulled the bulky register toward him, and inscribed his name on

the page with a rapidity equaled only by the illegibility of the result.

“Hello, Sam!” he said to the clerk. “How’s things? Get my telegram?”

“Yes,” answered the clerk; “but I can’t give you 27. It’s been taken for a week. I reserved 85 for you, and had to hold on with my teeth to do that.”

The reply of the young man was merely a brief mention of the place of torment.

“It *is* hot,” said the clerk blandly. “In from Cleveland?”

“Yes. Any letters for me?”

“Couple of telegrams. You’ll find them up in 85.”

“Oh, you were cocksure I’d take that room?”

“I was cocksure you’d have to. It is that or the fifth floor. We’re full. Couldn’t give a better room to the President if he came.”

“Oh, well, what’s good enough for the President I can put up with for a couple of days.”

The hand of the clerk descended on the bell. The negro sprang forward and took the “grip.”

“Eighty-five,” said the clerk; and the drummer and the Negro disappeared.

“Is there any place where I could leave my bag for a while?” the professor at last said timidly to the clerk.

“Your bag?”

The professor held it up in view.

“Oh, your grip. Certainly. Have a room, sir?” And the clerk’s hand hovered over the bell.

“No. At least, not just yet. You see, I’m——”

“All right. The baggage man there to the left will check it for you.”

“Any letters for Bond?” said a man, pushing himself in front of the professor. The clerk pulled out a fat bunch of letters from the compartment marked “B,” and handed the whole lot to the inquirer, who went rapidly over them, selected two that appeared to be addressed to him, and gave the letters a push toward the clerk, who placed them where they were before.

The professor paused a moment, then, realizing that the clerk had forgotten him, sought the baggage man, whom he found in a room filled with trunks and valises. The room communicated with the great hall by means of a square opening whose lower ledge was breast high. The professor stood before it, and handed the valise to the man behind this opening, who rapidly attached one brass check to the handle with a leather thong, and flung the other piece of brass to the professor. The latter was not sure but there was something to pay, still he quite correctly assumed that if there had been the somewhat brusque man would have had no hesitation in mentioning the fact; in which surmise his natural common sense proved a sure guide among strange surroundings. There was no false delicacy about the baggage man.

Although the professor was to a certain extent bewildered by the condition of things, there was still in his nature a certain dogged persistence that had before now stood him in good stead, and which had enabled him to distance, in the long run, much more brilliant men. He was not at all satisfied with his brief interview with the clerk. He

resolved to approach that busy individual again, if he could arrest his attention. It was some time before he caught the speaker's eye, as it were, but when he did so, he said:

"I was about to say to you that I am waiting for a friend from New York who may not yet have arrived. His name is Mr. Richard Yates of the——"

"Oh, Dick Yates! Certainly. He's here." Turning to the negro, he said: "Go down to the billiard room and see if Mr. Yates is there. If he is not, look for him at the bar."

The clerk evidently knew Mr. Dick Yates. Apparently not noticing the look of amazement that had stolen over the professor's face, the clerk said:

"If you wait in the reading room, I'll send Yates to you when he comes. The boy will find him if he's in the house; but he may be uptown."

The professor, disliking to trouble the obliging clerk further, did not ask him where the reading room was. He inquired, instead, of a hurrying porter, and received the curt but comprehensive answer:

"Dining room next floor. Reading, smoking, and writing rooms up the hall. Billiard room, bar, and lavatory downstairs."

The professor, after getting into the barber shop and the cigar store, finally found his way into the reading room. Numerous daily papers were scattered around on the table, each attached to a long, clumsy cleft holder made of wood; while other journals, similarly encumbered, hung from racks against the wall. The professor sat down in one of the easy leather-covered chairs, but, instead of taking up a paper, drew a thin book from his pocket, in which he was soon so

absorbed that he became entirely unconscious of his strange surroundings. A light touch on the shoulder brought him up from his book into the world again, and he saw, looking down on him, the stern face of a heavily mustached stranger.

“I beg your pardon, sir, but may I ask if you are a guest of this house?”

A shade of apprehension crossed the professor’s face as he slipped the book into his pocket. He had vaguely felt that he was trespassing when he first entered the hotel, and now his doubts were confirmed.

“I—I am not exactly a guest,” he stammered.

“What do you mean by not exactly a guest?” continued the other, regarding the professor with a cold and scrutinizing gaze. “A man is either a guest or he is not, I take it. Which is it in your case?”

“I presume, technically speaking, I am not.”

“Technically speaking! More evasions. Let me ask you, sir, as an ostensibly honest man, if you imagine that all this luxury—this—this elegance—is maintained for nothing? Do you think, sir, that it is provided for any man who has cheek enough to step out of the street and enjoy it? Is it kept up, I ask, for people who are, technically speaking, not guests?”

The expression of conscious guilt deepened on the face of the unfortunate professor. He had nothing to say. He realized that his conduct was too flagrant to admit of defense, so he attempted none. Suddenly the countenance of his questioner lit up with a smile, and he smote the professor on the shoulder.

“Well, old stick-in-the-mud, you haven’t changed a particle in fifteen years! You don’t mean to pretend you don’t know me?”

“You can’t—you can’t be Richard Yates?”

“I not only can, but I can’t be anybody else. I know, because I have often tried. Well, well, well, well! Stilly we used to call you; don’t you remember? I’ll never forget that time we sang ‘Oft in the stilly night’ in front of your window when you were studying for the exams. You always *were* a quiet fellow, Stilly. I’ve been waiting for you nearly a whole day. I was up just now with a party of friends when the boy brought me your card—a little philanthropic gathering—sort of mutual benefit arrangement, you know: each of us contributed what we could spare to a general fund, which was given to some deserving person in the crowd.”

“Yes,” said the professor dryly. “I heard the clerk telling the boy where he would be most likely to find you.”

“Oh, you did, eh?” cried Yates, with a laugh. “Yes, Sam generally knows where to send for me; but he needn’t have been so darned public about it. Being a newspaper man, I know what ought to go in print and what should have the blue pencil run through it. Sam is very discreet, as a general thing; but then he knew, of course, the moment he set eyes on you, that you were an old pal of mine.”

Again Yates laughed, a very bright and cheery laugh for so evidently wicked a man.

“Come along,” he said, taking the professor by the arm. “We must get you located.”

They passed out into the hall, and drew up at the clerk’s counter.

“I say, Sam,” cried Yates, “can’t you do something better for us than the fifth floor? I didn’t come to Buffalo to engage in ballooning. No sky parlors for me, if I can help it.”

“I’m sorry, Dick,” said the clerk; “but I expect the fifth floor will be gone when the Chicago express gets in.”

“Well, what can you do for us, anyhow?”

“I can let you have 518. That’s the next room to yours. Really, they’re the most comfortable rooms in the house this weather. Fine lookout over the lake. I wouldn’t mind having a sight of the lake myself, if I could leave the desk.”

“All right. But I didn’t come to look at the lake, nor yet at the railroad tracks this side, nor at Buffalo Creek either, beautiful and romantic as it is, nor to listen to the clanging of the ten thousand locomotives that pass within hearing distance for the delight of your guests. The fact is that, always excepting Chicago, Buffalo is more like—for the professor’s sake I’ll say Hades, than any other place in America.”

“Oh, Buffalo’s all right,” said the clerk, with that feeling of local loyalty which all Americans possess. “Say, are you here on this Fenian snap?”

“What Fenian snap?” asked the newspaper man.

“Oh! don’t you know about it? I thought, the moment I saw you, that you were here for this affair. Well, don’t say I told you, but I can put you on to one of the big guns if you want the particulars. They say they’re going to take Canada. I told ‘em that I wouldn’t take Canada as a gift, let alone fight for it. I’ve *been* there.”

Yates’ newspaper instinct thrilled him as he thought of the possible sensation. Then the light slowly died out of his

eyes when he looked at the professor, who had flushed somewhat and compressed his lips as he listened to the slighting remarks on his country.

“Well, Sam,” said the newspaper man at last, “it isn’t more than once in a lifetime that you’ll find me give the go-by to a piece of news, but the fact is I’m on my vacation just now. About the first I’ve had for fifteen years; so, you see, I must take care of it. No, let the *Argus* get scooped, if it wants to. They’ll value my services all the more when I get back. No. 518, I think you said?”

The clerk handed over the key, and the professor gave the boy the check for his valise at Yates’ suggestion.

“Now, get a move on you,” said Yates to the elevator boy. “We’re going right through with you.”

And so the two friends were shot up together to the fifth floor.

CHAPTER II.

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The sky parlor, as Yates had termed it, certainly commanded a very extensive view. Immediately underneath was a wilderness of roofs. Farther along were the railway tracks that Yates objected to; and a line of masts and propeller funnels marked the windings of Buffalo Creek, along whose banks arose numerous huge elevators, each marked by some tremendous letter of the alphabet, done in white paint against the somber brown of the big building. Still farther to the west was a more grateful and comforting sight for a hot day. The blue lake, dotted with white sails and an occasional trail of smoke, lay shimmering under the broiling sun. Over the water, through the distant summer haze, there could be seen the dim line of the Canadian shore.

“Sit you down,” cried Yates, putting both hands on the other’s shoulders, and pushing him into a chair near the window. Then, placing his finger on the electric button, he added: “What will you drink?”

“I’ll take a glass of water, if it can be had without trouble,” said Renmark.

Yates’ hand dropped from the electric button hopelessly to his side, and he looked reproachfully at the professor.

“Great Heavens!” he cried, “have something mild. Don’t go rashly in for Buffalo water before you realize what it is made of. Work up to it gradually. Try a sherry cobbler or a milk shake as a starter.”

“Thank you, no. A glass of water will do very well for me. Order what you like for yourself.”

“Thanks, I can be depended on for doing that.” He pushed the button, and, when the boy appeared, said: “Bring up an iced cobbler, and charge it to Professor Renmark, No. 518. Bring also a pitcher of ice water for Yates, No. 520. There,” he continued gleefully, “I’m going to have all the drinks, except the ice water, charged to you. I’ll pay the bill, but I’ll keep the account to hold over your head in the future. Professor Stillson Renmark, debtor to Metropolitan Grand—one sherry cobbler, one gin sling, one whisky cocktail, and so on. Now, then, Stilly, let’s talk business. You’re not married, I take it, or you wouldn’t have responded to my invitation so promptly.” The professor shook his head. “Neither am I. You never had the courage to propose to a girl; and I never had the time.”

“Lack of self-conceit was not your failing in the old days, Richard,” said Renmark quietly.

Yates laughed. “Well, it didn’t hold me back any, to my knowledge. Now I’ll tell you how I’ve got along since we attended old Scragmore’s academy together, fifteen years ago. How time does fly! When I left, I tried teaching for one short month. I had some theories on the education of our youth which did not seem to chime in with the prejudices the school trustees had already formed on the subject.”

The professor was at once all attention. Touch a man on his business, and he generally responds by being interested.

“And what were your theories?” he asked.

“Well, I thought a teacher should look after the physical as well as the mental welfare of his pupils. It did not seem to

me that his duty to those under his charge ended with mere book learning."

"I quite agree with you," said the professor cordially.

"Thanks. Well, the trustees didn't. I joined the boys at their games, hoping my example would have an influence on their conduct on the playground as well as in the schoolroom. We got up a rattling good cricket club. You may not remember that I stood rather better in cricket at the academy than I did in mathematics or grammar. By handicapping me with several poor players, and having the best players among the boys in opposition, we made a pretty evenly matched team at school section No. 12. One day, at noon, we began a game. The grounds were in excellent condition, and the opposition boys were at their best. My side was getting the worst of it. I was very much interested; and, when one o'clock came, I thought it a pity to call school and spoil so good and interesting a contest. The boys were unanimously of the same opinion. The girls were happy, picnicking under the trees. So we played cricket all the afternoon."

"I think that was carrying your theory a little too far," said the professor dubiously.

"Just what the trustees thought when they came to hear of it. So they dismissed me; and I think my leaving was the only case on record where the pupils genuinely mourned a teacher's departure. I shook the dust of Canada from my feet, and have never regretted it. I tramped to Buffalo, continuing to shake the dust off at every step. (Hello! here's your drinks at last, Stilly. I had forgotten about them—an unusual thing with me. That's all right, boy; charge it to

room 518. Ah! that hits the spot on a hot day.) Well, where was I? Oh, yes, at Buffalo. I got a place on a paper here, at just enough to keep life in me; but I liked the work. Then I drifted to Rochester at a bigger salary, afterward to Albany at a still bigger salary, and of course Albany is only a few hours from New York, and that is where all newspaper men ultimately land, if they are worth their salt. I saw a small section of the war as special correspondent, got hurt, and rounded up in the hospital. Since then, although only a reporter, I am about the top of the tree in that line, and make enough money to pay my poker debts and purchase iced drinks to soothe the asperities of the game. When there is anything big going on anywhere in the country, I am there, with other fellows to do the drudgery; I writing the picturesque descriptions and interviewing the big men. My stuff goes red-hot over the telegraph wire, and the humble postage stamp knows my envelopes no more. I am acquainted with every hotel clerk that amounts to anything from New York to San Francisco. If I could save money, I should be rich, for I make plenty; but the hole at the top of my trousers pocket has lost me a lot of cash, and I don’t seem to be able to get it mended. Now, you’ve listened with your customary patience in order to give my self-esteem, as you called it, full sway. I am grateful. I will reciprocate. How about yourself?”

The professor spoke slowly. “I have had no such adventurous career,” he began. “I have not shaken Canadian dust from my feet, and have not made any great success. I have simply plodded; and am in no danger of

becoming rich, although I suppose I spend as little as any man. After you were expel—after you left the aca——”

“Don’t mutilate the good old English language, Stilly. You were right in the first place. I am not thin-skinned. You were saying after I was expelled. Go on.”

“I thought perhaps it might be a sore subject. You remember, you were very indignant at the time, and——”

“Of course I was—and am still, for that matter. It was an outrage!”

“I thought it was proved that you helped to put the pony in the principal’s room.”

“Oh, certainly. *That*. Of course. But what I detested was the way the principal worked the thing. He allowed that villain Spink to turn evidence against us, and Spink stated I originated the affair, whereas I could claim no such honor. It was Spink’s own project, which I fell in with, as I did with every disreputable thing proposed. Of course the principal believed at once that I was the chief criminal. Do you happen to know if Spink has been hanged yet?”

“I believe he is a very reputable business man in Montreal, and much respected.”

“I might have suspected that. Well, you keep your eye on the respected Spink. If he doesn’t fail some day, and make a lot of money, I’m a Dutchman. But go on. This is digression. By the way, just push that electric button. You’re nearest, and it is too hot to move. Thanks. After I was expelled——”

“After your departure I took a diploma, and for a year or two taught a class in the academy. Then, as I studied during my spare time, I got a chance as master of a grammar school near Toronto, chiefly, as I think, though the

recommendation of Principal Scragmore. I had my degree by this time. Then——”

There was a gentle tap at the door.

“Come in!” shouted Yates. “Oh, it’s you. Just bring up another cooling cobbler, will you? and charge it, as before, to Professor Renmark, room 518. Yes; and then——”

“And then there came the opening in University College, Toronto. I had the good fortune to be appointed. There I am still, and there I suppose I shall stay. I know very few people, and am better acquainted with books than with men. Those whom I have the privilege of knowing are mostly studious persons, who have made, or will make, their mark in the world of learning. I have not had your advantage, of meeting statesmen who guide the destinies of a great empire.

“No; you always were lucky, Stilly. My experience is that the chaps who do the guiding are more anxious about their own pockets, or their own political advancement, than they are of the destinies. Still, the empire seems to take its course westward just the same. So old Scragmore’s been your friend, has he?”

“He has, indeed.”

“Well, he insulted me only the other day.”

“You astonish me. I cannot imagine so gentlemanly and scholarly a man as Principal Scragmore insulting anybody.”

“Oh, you don’t know him as I do. It was like this: I wanted to find out where you were, for reasons that I shall state hereafter. I cudgeled my brains, and then thought of old Scrag. I wrote him, and enclosed a stamped and addressed envelope, as all unsought contributors should do. He

answered—But I have his reply somewhere. You shall read it for yourself."

Yates pulled from his inside pocket a bundle of letters, which he hurriedly fingered over, commenting in a low voice as he did so: "I thought I answered that. Still, no matter. Jingo! haven't I paid that bill yet? This pass is run out. Must get another." Then he smiled and sighed as he looked at a letter in dainty handwriting; but apparently he could not find the document he sought.

"Oh, well, it doesn't matter. I have it somewhere. He returned me the prepaid envelope, and reminded me that United States stamps were of no use in Canada, which of course I should have remembered. But he didn't pay the postage on his own letter, so that I had to fork out double. Still, I don't mind that, only as an indication of his meanness. He went on to say that, of all the members of our class, you—*you*!—were the only one who had reflected credit on it. That was the insult. The idea of his making such a statement, when I had told him I was on the New York *Argus*! Credit to the class, indeed! I wonder if he ever heard of Brown after he was expelled. You know, of course. No? Well, Brown, by his own exertions, became president of the Alum Bank in New York, wrecked it, and got off to Canada with a clear half million. *Yes*, sir. I saw him in Quebec not six months ago. Keeps the finest span and carriage in the city, and lives in a palace. Could buy out old Scragmore a thousand times, and never feel it. Most liberal contributor to the cause of education that there is in Canada. He says education made him, and he's not a man to go back on

education. And yet Scragmore has the cheek to say that *you* were the only man in the class who reflects credit on it!”

The professor smiled quietly as the excited journalist took a cooling sip of the cobbler.

“You see, Yates, people’s opinions differ. A man like Brown may not be Principal Scragmore’s ideal. The principal may be local in his ideals of a successful man, or of one who reflects credit on his teaching.”

“Local? You bet he’s local. Too darned local for me. It would do that man good to live in New York for a year. But I’m going to get even with him. I’m going to write him up. I’ll give him a column and a half; see if I don’t. I’ll get his photograph, and publish a newspaper portrait of him. If that doesn’t make him quake, he’s a cast-iron man. Say, you haven’t a photograph of old Scrag that you can lend me, have you?”

“I have; but I won’t lend it for such a purpose. However, never mind the principal. Tell me your plans. I am at your disposal for a couple of weeks, or longer if necessary.”

“Good boy! Well, I’ll tell you how it is. I want rest and quiet, and the woods, for a week or two. This is how it happened: I have been steadily at the grindstone, except for a while in the hospital; and that, you will admit, is not much of a vacation. The work interests me, and I am always in the thick of it. Now, it’s like this in the newspaper business: Your chief is never the person to suggest that you take a vacation. He is usually short of men and long on things to do, so if you don’t worry him into letting you off, he won’t lose any sleep over it. He’s content to let well enough alone every time. Then there is always somebody who wants to

get away on pressing business,—grandmother's funeral, and that sort of thing,—so if a fellow is content to work right along, his chief is quite content to let him. That's the way affairs have gone for years with me. The other week I went over to Washington to interview a senator on the political prospects. I tell you what it is, Stilly, without bragging, there are some big men in the States whom no one but me *can* interview. And yet old Scrag says I'm no credit to his class! Why, last year my political predictions were telegraphed all over this country, and have since appeared in the European press. No credit! By Jove, I would like to have old Scrag in a twenty-four-foot ring, with thin gloves on, for about ten minutes!"

"I doubt if he would shine under those circumstances. But never mind him. He spoke, for once, without due reflection, and with perhaps an exaggerated remembrance of your school-day offenses. What happened when you went to Washington?"

"A strange thing happened. When I was admitted to the senator's library, I saw another fellow, whom I thought I knew, sitting there. I said to the senator: 'I will come when you are alone.' The senator looked up in surprise, and said: 'I am alone.' I didn't say anything, but went on with my interview; and the other fellow took notes all the time. I didn't like this, but said nothing, for the senator is not a man to offend, and it is by not offending these fellows that I can get the information I do. Well, the other fellow came out with me, and as I looked at him I saw that he was myself. This did not strike me as strange at the time, but I argued with him all the way to New York, and tried to show him that

he wasn’t treating me fairly. I wrote up the interview, with the other fellow interfering all the while, so I compromised, and half the time put in what he suggested, and half the time what I wanted in myself. When the political editor went over the stuff, he looked alarmed. I told him frankly just how I had been interfered with, and he looked none the less alarmed when I had finished. He sent at once for a doctor. The doctor metaphorically took me to pieces, and then said to my chief: ‘This man is simply worked to death. He must have a vacation, and a real one, with absolutely nothing to think of, or he is going to collapse, and that with a suddenness which will surprise everybody.’ The chief, to my astonishment, consented without a murmur, and even upbraided me for not going away sooner. Then the doctor said to me: ‘You get some companion—some man with no brains, if possible, who will not discuss politics, who has no opinion on anything that any sane man would care to talk about, and who couldn’t say a bright thing if he tried for a year. Get such a man to go off to the woods somewhere. Up in Maine or in Canada. As far away from post offices and telegraph offices as possible. And, by the way, don’t leave your address at the *Argus* office.’ Thus it happened, Stilly, when he described this man so graphically, I at once thought of you.”

“I am deeply gratified, I am sure,” said the professor, with the ghost of a smile, “to be so promptly remembered in such a connection, and if I can be of service to you, I shall be very glad. I take it, then, that you have no intention of stopping in Buffalo?”

“You bet I haven’t. I’m in for the forest primeval, the murmuring pines and the hemlock, bearded with moss and green in the something or other—I forget the rest. I want to quit lying on paper, and lie on my back instead, on the sward or in a hammock. I’m going to avoid all boarding houses or delightful summer resorts, and go in for the quiet of the forest.”

“There ought to be some nice places along the lake shore.”

“No, sir. No lake shore for me. It would remind me of the Lake Shore Railroad when it was calm, and of Long Branch when it was rough. *No*, sir. The woods, the woods, and the woods. I have hired a tent and a lot of cooking things. I’m going to take that tent over to Canada to-morrow; and then I propose we engage a man with a team to cart it somewhere into the woods, fifteen or twenty miles away. We shall have to be near a farmhouse, so that we can get fresh butter, milk, and eggs. This, of course, is a disadvantage; but I shall try to get near someone who has never even heard of New York.”

“You may find that somewhat difficult.”

“Oh, I don’t know. I have great hopes of the lack of intelligence in the Canadians.”

“Often the narrowest,” said the professor slowly, “are those who think themselves the most cosmopolitan.”

“Right you are,” cried Yates, skimming lightly over the remark, and seeing nothing applicable to his case in it. “Well, I’ve laid in about half a ton, more or less, of tobacco, and have bought an empty jug.”

“An empty one?”

“Yes. Among the few things worth having that the Canadians possess, is good whisky. Besides, the empty jar will save trouble at the customhouse. I don’t suppose Canadian rye is as good as the Kentucky article, but you and I will have to scrub along on it for a while. And, talking of whisky, just press the button once again.”

The professor did so, saying:

“The doctor made no remark, I suppose, about drinking less or smoking less, did he?”

“In my case? Well, come to think of it, there *was* some conversation in that direction. Don’t remember at the moment just what it amounted to; but all physicians have their little fads, you know. It doesn’t do to humor them too much. Ah, boy, there you are again. Well, the professor wants another drink. Make it a gin fizz this time, and put plenty of ice in it; but don’t neglect the gin on that account. Certainly; charge it to room 518.”

CHAPTER III.

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“What’s all this tackle?” asked the burly and somewhat red-faced customs officer at Fort Erie.

“This,” said Yates, “is a tent, with the poles and pegs appertaining thereto. These are a number of packages of tobacco, on which I shall doubtless have to pay something into the exchequer of her Majesty. This is a jug used for the holding of liquids. I beg to call your attention to the fact that it is at present empty, which unfortunately prevents me making a libation to the rites of good-fellowship. What my friend has in that valise I don’t know, but I suspect a gambling outfit, and would advise you to search him.”

“My valise contains books principally, with some articles of wearing apparel,” said the professor, opening his grip.

The customs officer looked with suspicion on the whole outfit, and evidently did not like the tone of the American. He seemed to be treating the customs department in a light and airy manner, and the officer was too much impressed by the dignity of his position not to resent flippancy. Besides, there were rumors of Fenian invasion in the air, and the officer resolved that no Fenian should get into the country without paying duty.

“Where are you going with this tent?”

“I’m sure I don’t know. Perhaps you can tell us. I don’t know the country about here. Say, Stilly, I’m off uptown to attend to the emptiness in this stone utensil. I’ve been empty too often myself not to sympathize with its condition.

You wrestle this matter out about the tent. You know the ways of the country, whereas I don't."

It was perhaps as well that Yates left negotiations in the hands of his friend. He was quick enough to see that he made no headway with the officer, but rather the opposite. He slung the jar ostentatiously over his shoulder, to the evident discomfort of the professor, and marched up the hill to the nearest tavern, whistling one of the lately popular war tunes.

"Now," he said to the barkeeper, placing the jar tenderly on the bar, "fill that up to the nozzle with the best rye you have. Fill it with the old familiar juice, as the late poet Omar saith."

The bartender did as he was requested.

"Can you disguise a little of that fluid in any way, so that it may be taken internally without a man suspecting what he is swallowing?"

The barkeeper smiled. "How would a cocktail fill the vacancy?"

"I can suggest nothing better," replied Yates. "If you are sure you know how to make it."

The man did not resent this imputation of ignorance. He merely said, with the air of one who gives an incontrovertible answer:

"I am a Kentucky man myself."

"Shake!" cried Yates briefly, as he reached his hand across the bar. "How is it you happened to be here?"

"Well, I got in to a little trouble in Louisville, and here I am, where I can at least look at God's country."

“Hold on,” protested Yates. “You’re making only *one* cocktail.”

“Didn’t you say one?” asked the man, pausing in the compounding.

“Bless you, I never saw one cocktail made in my life. You are with me on this.”

“Just as you say,” replied the other, as he prepared enough for two.

“Now I’ll tell you my fix,” said Yates confidentially. “I’ve got a tent and some camp things down below at the customhouse shanty, and I want to get them taken into the woods, where I can camp out with a friend. I want a place where we can have absolute rest and quiet. Do you know the country round here? Perhaps you could recommend a spot.”

“Well, for all the time I’ve been here, I know precious little about the back country. I’ve been down the road to Niagara Falls, but never back in the woods. I suppose you want some place by the lake or the river?”

“No, I don’t. I want to get clear back into the forest—if there is a forest.”

“Well, there’s a man in to-day from somewhere near Ridgeway, I think. He’s got a hay rack with him, and that would be just the thing to take your tent and poles. Wouldn’t be very comfortable traveling for you, but it would be all right for the tent, if it’s a big one.”

“That will suit us exactly. We don’t care a cent about the comfort. Roughing it is what we came for. Where will I find him?”