

OVER THE BORDER

Bill Nye Writes From Canada That He is Innocent.

AN EXPERIENCE WITH RAZORS

His Clothes Just Fit a Custom House Officer—Staying at a Hotel Kept by a Popular Man.

IN CANADA WITHOUT A CENSURE

Once more I have evaded the customs of a neighboring country and the aspects of a mighty dominion. I have never been the slave to the customs of my own country; why should I submit to those of a province?



A CLEAN SHAVE.

I have just rearranged my trunk and tucked carefully back into it the thrilling narrative of a rich slumber robe which fluttered in the Canadian breeze all the way from Windsor to London. Custom house officers do not know how to repack a trunk after they have searched its contents, and they shut the lid wrong, so that it takes six men and a P. K. Dederick derrick to open it after one gets at his hotel.

I carry with me a change of linen and underclothing while traveling, and have never before found a customs officer who seemed to think these things would fit him. So I have escaped. But this time it was different. I saw right away when this one looked at me that he was just my size, though less intellectual. He had the same long, swanlike throat, which looks so well in full dress with a string of red coral beads around it. He had also the same boneless tentacles for limbs that I am using, and his feet undulated a good deal.

I am very neat about arranging my trunk, and so he seemed to think many of my things were new just because they were tidy. My method of packing a trunk was acquired at Heidelberg. When I want anything out of the trunk I upset it on the bed and thus find it readily.

The officer wanted to keep my dress suit because it pleased him, I presume. It is a nice suit, made in Boston by a perfect gentleman.

He wanted me to pay duty on a cigar that I had almost smoked up. He was going to seize a dozen perfectos that Mr. Burbank had, but when he found that Mr. Burbank had chewed each one a little before crossing the line he said: "All right; never mind. They are free."

One man ahead of me, I noticed, evaded the eye of the officer, and while conversing with him looked out the window. Afterward I asked him why he did that.

"Well," he said, "I didn't mind looking him in the face, but I did not want him to notice my breath. I am trying to get it in free."

He was a fat man, and carried a massive watch which he had to remove before he could get into the car, and he brought it in in his hand.

I carry even razors with me, one of which I use on each day of the week. This I have at home special razors for Kenton, Whitsunday and Guy Fawkes Day. These razors I bought at various bargain counters through the United States. Some of them will cut a hair.

Mr. Jefferson says that the way to buy razors is to get a twenty-five center in every town you visit for a year, and out of the lot you may get a good one. He does that way, he says, instead of buying a \$1.50 razor every little while and only getting one-tenth the chance to draw a prize.

I have done that way, but I judge that Mr. Jefferson had preceded me and bought the only good one there was in the town.

Last spring I began to shave myself because I got tired of reading The Police Gazette while the neighbors dropped into the barber shop to get their hair cut and get shampooed and also their whiskers dyed; also because barbers often referred to my baldness before folks and made me feel hurt.

I lived in the country, too, for two or three weeks in March, and the nearest barber I knew of was a farm hand who had shaved the prisoners for eight years at Joliet, Ill. So my beard grew out quite rank and nodded in the wind. It is redder than I thought it was, and on one side it grows upward, thus giving me a surprised and startled air.

No cow I am shaving myself. I got a new razor in Chicago. It had a lovely handle, and on the blade it said—

REMEMBER ME.

I did so. For a shaving mug I use a mustache mug given me in Paris by an elderly French lady who said she did not need it, as she had two besides this one.

After I have shaved I want to be quiet for an hour or two and generally avoid company, especially my pastor. But I am improving all the time. I can sharpen my razor now without cutting the strap in two, and sometimes my face would almost seem to indicate a boughten shave. One strap lasts me a week now, and my alarm bill is a mere trifle.

The customs officer wanted these razors and the mustache cup, which I valued because of its associations only. He thought I was introducing them into the neighboring dominion. He thought I was going to start a barber shop.

Then I think it is because I dress too much. It makes people think I am a gambler.

London is a good city—on the Canada side. There are 20,000 people there. They are excellent people, too, resembling me very much in appearance. London has a good hotel at the depot.

We wrote quite a lot of letters there and posted them in American stamped envelopes. Then we stood around in the cold and tried the postman to give them back to us so that we could get Canadian stamps on them, which are these extra ones, making five cents laid out on each of our letters.

The street cars in London run on runners in winter, and the track is abandoned till the soft breath of spring comes again and thaws back to life and light and song the still and frosty features and the cold, white bosom of the slumbering earth.

The Canadian Pacific has its latching hanging out for one and all. The passenger agent at London came to us and wanted to sell tickets to our company, consisting of Mr. Burbank and myself. We said that other roads were competing for us, and that we were wavering. So he said that if we would travel by his road to Detroit, a ride of over three hours, he would transfer us there to the Michigan Central, pay our hotel bills while in Canada, furnish us a year's subscription to London Punch, with key to same, and a pair of beautiful pictures by Rembrandt entitled "Wide Awake" and "Fast Asleep."

We accepted, and now I will get Punch regularly at my home. The humor of Punch is very soothing to me. Compared with the peppery wit of the French and the insidious, surprising and stimulating humor of our own country, English humor reminds me of boiled rice. Boiled rice taken in moderation isn't going to hurt any man. It furnishes an excuse for the gestures of eating and rounds out the abdomen to a degree—to several degrees, in fact—yet it does not excite one.

It is so with English humor. I have known men to apply themselves to English humor for several years and thin out their blood that way so that they prolonged their lives for a long time.

A Canadian yesterday spoke to me of John Bull's drink bill, and showed me a little chart, which I give herewith, showing the comparative sizes of the bills in England for liquor, bread, milk, tea, coffee, cocoa and education. He said it was creating a great deal of discussion among the politicians.



THE LITTLE CHART.

Yes, I said, I had heard that they were at lagerheads.

Being under the British flag seems to affect my mind, I think.

A week ago we stopped for a night at the Banting House, after a long, hard ride in the palatial slumbering car in-somnia. The Banting House is kept by one of those popular men who are not good for anything on earth but just to be popular. When we came in he welcomed us by extending a breath to us across the register upon which we hung our overcoats with impunity. At first I did not know why he drank, but after I had been at table I saw that anesthetics of some kind should go with every steak.

Everything was neat and clean at the Banting House. The pale, and wife did the best she could, but Banting himself did the buying, and that's why the steaks didn't yield to climatic influences.

You have seen the sad-eyed wife of a popular man, no doubt—a man who could have married anybody; he took her "because it would have killed her if he hadn't," a man with curly hair and a mustache which he pieces out with chin whiskers. He is so popular that he has himself photographed in the paucity of some secret order every time he gets to feeling pretty well. But his wife wears the same shawl that the last three babies have slept in. He is so popular that people take advantage of his good nature and lead him astray and get him to drinking. That's what he tells his wife.

He is just simply a great big, soft, self-indulgent, impalpable ass. That's what he is, and his house, everywhere that he has anything to do with it, shows stinginess, neglect and incompetency.

He wore a wooden leg, did Mr. Banting. He permitted me to think he lost it in the war at first. Then he went on to speak more fully of his great loss. I was told afterward that he lost it in defense of his honor, such as it was. He was stopping, it seems, over night at the house of a man who was not at home himself; just only his wife, that's all. In the night his involuntary host came home, and thinking it was going to be a little crowded there shot three-quarters of a pound of buckshot and some old single nails into Mr. Banting's leg as he was getting on the window—a window that gave upon the wall. When Mr. Banting was drawn out of the well by a reporter who could draw a man and better than anybody else, it was claimed, the doctor told Banting that he would have to contribute that leg to his washing record and the bill would be eighty dollars for same.

Mr. Banting did not tell me about this, but neighbors did so. Mr. Banting, however, was a little sentimental the morning I saw him. He spoke tenderly of his lost leg as we sat together, and ever and anon he tapped the wooden one with the blade of a large pocket-knife with which he had just been removing one of his indigestible steaks from between his teeth. Then he took from his pocket a piece of bone which had been carried for years in the same pocket with his tobacco. He looked at it sadly.

"That," he said, "came off of the knee-pan. It is as good as ever it was. It is the lid of the knee-pan."

Then he looked out through the window as well as he could and went on: "I lost my mother next March in a year. She always appreciated me. My wife never has. I could have married my pick of the girls of our place, but I took Lora because she was party then. She was one of them girls that fade awful quick, and besides she don't appreciate me nor how popular I am." Then he signed.

"Yesterday," he went on, "I made a solemn journey—a mighty solemn journey."

"To your mother's grave, do you mean?"

"Yes."

"Where is it?"

"It is over at East Haddock, about eighteen miles from here. It may be just a sentiment with me, for I'm of a sensitive and refined nature naturally; but I made a pilgrimage over there yesterday, cold as it was."

He paused and rubbed his nose hard with a big red handkerchief, and his voice choked up a little.

"Yes, I took up my leg that was buried here at the time and—a slight quiver of the chin—"and buried it over at East Haddock alongside of mother."

Bill Nye

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