



THE CONFABULATORY CANOEIST

RELATES HIS THRILLING ADVENTURES DURING A
TOUR FROM LONDON TO DETROIT.

I.

THIS narrative consists of plain, dry, hard facts, pure and unadulterated, and, moreover, nearly all true, being founded on the personal experience and imagination of the narrator, your humble servant. I do not wish the reader to cherish the belief that canoeing is a pastime of unalloyed bliss, for this is not only erroneous, but contrary to the laws of nature, it having been ordained that we shall *not* enjoy unsophisticated pleasure during our brief sojourn in this vale of tears. There are many things which tend to dispel the romantic association connected with canoeing; foremost among which can be classed the involuntary cold baths which all ambitious canoeists indulge in. The romance of canoeing disappears like a summer dream before the prosaic and unelevated occupation of paddling beneath the frizzling sun of July, whose powerful rays soon transform the skin of the victimized "voyageur" into a hue rivalling, in its richness of coloring, a July sunset.

In contemplating this canoe trip, I was led on by the delusive hope of fame and honor. The danger would be great—the task Herculean; but the more I thought about it the more hot and anxious I became to wield the paddle and glide o'er the dark and unknown waters. I laid my prospectus before my friend, Artemus Warluck. He was anxious to start that night, but I told him to be calm. Our two lives rested on the way in which we were to carry out this dangerous undertaking.

There is a tradition, that two years ago a party of rash explorers, in descending the river a few miles below Bryon, became stranded on a hidden sardine-can, and after enduring many hardships were finally pulled off by a farmer's team; but their noble mud scow was a complete wreck! Therefore, we should be cautious. Again, great precaution should be exercised in choosing the time of departure, the most favorable being in the spring, before our great waterway has dwindled down and rendered navigation difficult for larger vessels, on account of the hidden oyster-cans and broken crockery. So we set about making preparations. Our canoe was a "Rice Lake," and would hold a large amount of goods.

After suggesting several things to take, I asked Artemus if he could think of other necessities.

"Matches and pins," he said.

In a severe voice, I told him that considerations of these details were unnecessary, and unbecoming to his superior intellect.

Aiming higher, he said, "We'll have to take a stove."

I asked him if he would like to take a baseburner or a patent gas stove?

The poor innocent replied, that he "guessed the baseburner would be handier."

It took me twenty minutes to show him the inconvenience that the presence of a stove would cause; but I generously offered to sacrifice all earthly comfort and take the stove, if he would carry it and the necessary half-ton of coal across the portages.

Artemus, with tears and a choking voice, thanked me fervently, but concluded in a weak tone that we had better not take the stove.

After suggesting to take a cow, a spring mattress, a two by-three looking-glass, and sundry other equally useful and appropriate articles for travellers, I told Artemus to sit down and "shut up."

II.

The eventful day of our departure at length arrived, and every suggested contingency was finally provided for. In case of an upset, we had life preservers; to prevent starvation, we had condensed mince-meat and beans. Our canoe lay packed and ready for the journey. The provisions, clothing and other necessities (besides that contained in bottles) were stowed away under deck or in boxes amidship. Our weapons consisted of a "Bull-dog" revolver with a rheumatic trigger, and a muzzle-loading shot-gun that had to be aimed four feet to the left and thirteen inches low, if one expected to hit anything. Our modest straw-stack hats were for protection from the sun's warming rays, and our corn-cob pipes were for defence against the attack of mosquitoes and sand-flies. But the mosquitoes of the "lower Thames" are invincible. The notorious New Jersey mosquito would grow green with envy could he hear the sonorous and melodious hummings of our Canadian "skeeter." Some lemon-hearted cynic may remark that this is said from national pride. But it isn't. It is experience—sad and pathetic.

We shoved off from shore, and the first stroke was taken at exactly five o'clock. This was done to humor Artemus, who is very precise on such points.

A heavy grey mist hung over the water, but under the warming rays of the morning sun it soon melted away and vanished. The morning sky was that delicate pale blue, shading off into amber pink towards the east; not a wave, not a ripple, was on the water, and nothing but the distant song of some early awakened bird was to be heard. There was a subdued melody in the monotonous splash of the paddles in the silvery water, which gurgled and rippled as