

“Here it is! ‘Insects, not crude, one quarter cent per pound and tin per cint. ad valorum.’ What is ad valorum, I dunno, but ’t is a wonderful thing th’ tariff is. Who would be thinkin’ tin years ago that Professor Jocolino would be comin’ t’ Ameriky with one hundred fleas, not crude, in his dress-suit portmanteau? But th’ Congress was th’ boy t’ think of everything. ‘No free fleas!’ says they. ‘Look at th’ poor American flea, crude an’ uneducated, an’ see h’ struggle it has, competin’ with th’ flea of Europe, Asia, an’ Africa. Down with th’ furrin flea,’ says Congress, ‘protect th’ poor American insect. One quarter cent per pound an’ tin per cint. ad valorum for th’ flea of Europe!’”

Mike Flannery brought his hand down on the book he held, and the three men, who had been watching him with a fascinated stare, jumped nervously.

“That ’s what Congress says,” said Flannery, glaring at the professor, “but up