

The clouds had not all passed by as the pedestrians found to their cost, for, where there are clouds over the bush in July, there also are mosquitoes. Physically as well as psychically, Wilkinson was thin-skinned, and afforded a ready and appetizing feast to the blood-suckers. His companion still smoked his pipe in defence, but for a long time in silence. "The multitude of flies" made him gurgled occasionally, as he gazed upon the schoolmaster, whose blue and yellow silk handkerchief was spread over the back of his head and tied under his chin. To quote Wordsworth then would have been like putting a match to a powder magazine. The flies were worst on the margin of a pond formed by the extension of a sluggish black stream. "Go on, Wilks, my boy, out of the pests, while I add some water plants to my collection;" but this, Wilkinson's chivalrous notions of friendship would not allow him to do. He broke off a leafy branch from a young maple, and slashed it about him, while the botanist ran along the edge of the pond looking for flowers within reach. As usual, they were just out of reach and no more. So he had to take off shoes and socks, turn up the legs of his trousers, and wade in after them. "Look at that now!" he said with pride as he returned with his booty, "Nymphaea odorata, Nuphar advena, and Brasenia peltata; aren't they beauties?"

"What is that black object on your leg?" the dominie managed to gasp.

"I'm thankful to you for saying that, my kind friend, for it's a murdering leech."

"Salt is the only thing to take them off with," remarked Wilkinson really interested; "and that is just what we are deficient in."

"I say, Wilks, try a drop of the crater on him; don't waste the blessings of Providence, but just let the least particle fall on his nose, while I scrape him off."

The surgical operation succeeded, and the schoolmaster half forgot his own troubles in doing good to his friend. While the latter was reclothing his feet, and pressing his specimens, the maple branch ceased working, and its owner finely apostrophized the field of white and yellow blossoms.

There sits the water lily like a sovereign,
Her little empire is a fairy world,
The purple dragon-fly above it hovering,
As when her fragile ivory uncurled,
A thousand years ago.

"Bravo, Wilks, if you are poaching on my preserves; but I wish that same purple dragon-fly would hover round here in thousands for a minute. It's a pleasure to see them sail along and gobble up the mosquitoes."

The dominie continued:—

To-day I saw the dragon-fly
Come from the wells where he did lie.

An inner impulse rent the veil
Of his old husk; from head to tail
Came out clear plates of sapphire mail.

He dried his wings: like gauze they grew;
Thro' crofts and pastures wet with dew
A living flash of light he flew.

"Hurroo!" cried Coristine, as with knapsack readjusted, he took his companion by the arm and resumed the journey; "Hurroo again, I say, it's into the very heart of nature we're getting now. Bless the mosquito and the leech for opening the well of English undefiled."

Wilkinson was wound up to go, and repeated with fine conversational effect:—

But now, perplexed by what th' old man had said,
My question eagerly did I renew
How is it that you live, and what is it you do?

He, with a smile, did then his words repeat;
And said, that, gathering leeches far and wide,
He travell'd; stirring thus about his feet
The waters of the ponds where they abide.
"Once I could meet with them on every side;
But they have dwindled long by slow decay;
Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may."

"Dad, if the old man had been here, he might have made his fortune by this time. 'Stirring thus about his feet the waters of the ponds where they abide' may be fine employment, but the law's good enough for me, seeing they're bound to dwindle long by slow decay. You don't happen to have a scrap on a botanist, do you?"

"Yes," replied the schoolmaster, "and on a blind one, too:—

And he knows all shapes of flowers: the heath, the fox-glove with its bells,
The palmy fern's green elegance, fauned in soft woodland smells;
The milkwort on the mossy turf his nice touch fingers trace,
And the eye-bright, though he sees it not, he finds it in its place."

"A blind botanist, and in the Old Country, too; well that's strange! True, a blind man could know the lovely wallflowers and hyacinths and violets and all these sweet-scented things by their smell. But to know the little blue milkwort and the Euphrasia by touch, bangs me. If it was our fine, big pitcher plant, or the ladies' slipper, or the giant-fringed orchis, or the May apple, I could understand it; but perhaps he knew the flowers before he got to be blind. I think I could find my way blindfolded to some spots about Toronto where special plants grow. I believe, Wilks, that a man couldn't name a subject you wouldn't have a quotation for; you're wonderful!"

Wilkinson was delighted. This flattery was meat and drink to him. Holding the arm of his admiring friend, he poured out his soul in verse, allowing his companion, from time to time, the opportunity of contributing a little to the poetic feast. The two virtually forgot to notice the level, sandy road and tame scenery, the clouded sun, the troublesome flies. For the time being, they were every-

thing, the one to the other. By their own spirits were they defied, or thought they were, at the moment.

Though the schoolmaster was revelling in the appreciation of his friend, he could not fail to perceive that he limped a little. "You have hurt your foot, Corry, my dear fellow, and never told me."

"Oh, it's nothing," replied the light-hearted lawyer; "I trod on a stick in that pond where I got the Brasenia and things, and my big toe's a bit sore, that's all."

"Corry, we have forgotten the blackthorns. Now, in this calm hour, sacred to friendship, let us present each other with nature's staff, a walking-stick cut from the bush, humble tokens of our mutual esteem."

Coristine agreed, and the result was a separation and careful scrutiny of the underbrush on both sides of the road, which ended in the finding of a dogwood by the lawyer, and of a striped maple by the dominie—both straight above and curled at the root. These, having removed from the bush, they brought into shape with their pocket-knives. Then Coristine carved "F. W." on the handle of his, while Wilkinson engraved "E. C." on the one he carried. This being done, each presented his fellow with "this utterly inadequate expression of sincere friendship," which was accepted "not for its intrinsic worth, but because of the generous spirit which prompted the gift." "Whenever my eye rests on these letters by friendship traced," said the dominie, "my pleasant companion of this happy day will be held in remembrance."

"And when my fingers feel 'E. C.' on the handle," retorted the lawyer, "I'll be wishing that my dear friend's lot, that gave it me, may be easy too. Faith but that's a hard pun on an Irishman."

"Seriously, now, Corry, does it give you any satisfaction to be guilty of these—ah—rhetorical figures?"

"All the delight in the world, Wilks, my boy."

"But it lowers the tone of your conversation; it puts you on a level with common men; it grieves me."

"If that last is the case, Farquhar, I'll do my best to fight against my besetting sin. You'll admit I've been very tender of your feelings with them."

"How's your foot now?"

"Oh, splendid! This stick of yours is a powerful help to it."

Jog on, jog on, the footpath way,
And merrily hent the stile-a:
A merry heart goes all the day,
Your sad tires in a mile-a.

Shakespeare's songs remind me of young Witherspoon. There was a party at old Tylor's, and a lady was singing 'Tell me where is fancy bred?' when young Witherspoon comes up to the piano in a hurry, and says: 'Why, don't you know?—at Nasmith's and Webb's.'

"Lord! how savage old Tylor was! I thought he would have kicked the young ass out."

"That is just what we lovers of literature have to endure from the Philistines. But, Corry, my dear fellow, here is the rain!"

The rain fell, at first drop by drop, but afterwards more smartly, forcing the pedestrians to take refuge under some leafy pines. There they sat quietly for a time, till their interest was excited by a deep growl, which seemed to come round a jog in the road just ahead.

"Is that a bear or a wolf, Corry?" the dominie asked in a whisper.

"More like a wild cat or a lynx," cheerfully responded his friend.

The growl was repeated, and then a human-like voice was heard which quieted the ferocious animal.

"Whatever it is, it's got a keeper," whispered Coristine, "so we needn't be afraid."

Then the sun shone forth brightly and a rainbow spanned the sky.

"The rainbow comes and goes," said the lawyer, which gave the schoolmaster occasion to recite:—

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky.
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The child is father of the man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

"Brayvo, well done, ancore!" cried a cheery and cheeky voice coming round the jog; "o'd a thought of meetin' a play hactor 'ere in the bush! Down, Muggins, down," the latter to a largish and wiry-looking terrier, the author of the ominous growls.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Wilkinson with dignity, "I have nothing to do with the stage, beyond admiring the ancient ornaments of the English drama."

"Hall right, no offence meant and none taken, I'ope. But you did it well, sir, devilish well, I tell you. My name is Rawdon, and I'm a workin' geologist and mineralogist hon the tramp."

The stranger, who had thus introduced himself, was short, about five feet five, fairly stout, with a large head covered with curly reddish hair, his whiskers and goatee of the same hue, his eyes pale grayish, his nose retroussé, and his mouth like a half-moon lying on its back. He was dressed in a tweed suit of a very broad check; his head was crowned with a pith hat, almost too large even for it; and he wore gaiters. But, what endeared him to the pedestrians was his knapsack made of some kind of ribbed brown waterproof cloth.

"Either of you gents take any hinterest in science?" he asked affably, whereupon the schoolmaster took it upon himself to reply.

"I, as an educationist, dabble a little in geology, mineralogy, and palaeontology. My friend is a botanist. You are Mr. Rawdon. Allow me, Mr. Rawdon, to introduce my friend Mr. Eugene Coristine, of Osgoode Hall, Barrister, and my humble self, Farquhar Wilkinson, of the Toronto Schools."

Mr. Rawdon bowed and shook hands, then threw himself into a stage attitude, and said: "His it possible that I am face to face with Farquhar Wilkinson, the describer of a hentirely new species of Favosites? Sir, this is a perroud day for a workin' geologist. Your servant, Dr. Coristine!"

"I'm no doctor, Mr. Rawdon," replied the lawyer, a bit angrily; "I passed all my examinations in the regular way."

"Hif it's a fair question, gents, ware are you a goin'?" asked the working geologist.

"We intend, if nothing intervenes, to spend the night at the village of Peskiwanshow," answered Wilkinson, whose heart warmed to the knapsack man that knew his great discovery.

"Beastly 'ole!" remarked Mr. Rawdon; "but, as I'm a long way hoff Barrie, I'll go there with you, if Mr. Curystone is hagreeable. I don't want to miss the hoppportunity of making your better haacquaintance, Dr. Wilkinson."

"I am sure that my friend and I will be charmed with your excellent society, as a man, a fellow pedestrian and a lover of science," the dominie effusively replied.

"Well, Muggins, we're a goin' back, hold dog, along o' two gents as haint above keepin' company wi' you and me," whereat Muggins barked and sought to make friends with his new companions. Coristine liked Muggins, but he did not love Muggins' master. Sotto voce, he said: "A cheeky little cad!"

Mr. Rawdon and Wilkinson forged on ahead. Coristine and Muggins brought up the rear.

"What are you working at now, Mr. Rawdon?" asked the schoolmaster.

"I'm workin' hup the Trenton and Utica, the Udsen River and Medina formations. They hall crop hup between 'ere and Collin'wood. It's the limestone I'm hafter, you know," he said, sinking his voice to a whisper; "the limestone grits, dolomites, and all that sort of thing. Wen I can get a good grinstun quarry, I'll be a made man."

"Grinstun?" queried Wilkinson, helplessly.

"Yes, you know, g, r, i, n, d, s, t, o, n, e, grinstun, for sharpenin' tools on; turn 'em with a handle and pour water on top. Now, sir, hevery farm 'ouse 'as got to 'ave a grinstun, and there's 'ow many farm 'ouses in Canidy! wy, 'undreds of thousands. You see, there's money in it. Let me find a grinstun quarry and I'm a made man. And wot's more, I've found the grinstun quarry."

"You have? Where?" asked the dominie.

The working geologist drew off, and playfully planted the forefinger of his right hand on the side of his upturned nose, saying "Walker!" Then he relented, and, reapproaching his companion, said: "Honour bright, now, you're no workin' geologist, lookin' out for the blunt? You're a collector of Favosites Wilkinsonia, Stenopora fibrosa, Asaphus Canadensis, Ambonychia radiata, Heliopora fragilis, and all that rot, ain't you now?"

"I certainly seek to make no money out of science, and am a lover of the fossil records of ancient life in our planet, but, above all, I assure you that I would no more think of betraying your confidence than of picking your pocket. If you have any doubts, do not make me your confidant."

"Hall right, hold cock, I mean, my dear sir. You're safe has a church. There's a 'undred hacre lot hup in the township of Flanders, has full of grinstuns as a hegg's full of meat. It belongs to a Miss Do-Please-us, but who the dooce she is, I dunno. That's just wot I'm a goin' to find hout. If she hain't paid her taxes, bein' hon the non-resident roll, I may be hable to pick hup the land for less than ten dollars, and it'll bring me hin tens of thousands. Then I'll skip back to hold Hingland and cut it fat."

Coristine was not so taken up with Muggins that he failed to overhear the conversation. He did not catch it all, but he learned that a lady, a maiden lady, whose name mediated between Jewplessy and Do Please, owned valuable mineral lands, of which the working geologist intended to deprive her by unfair means. Miss Do-Please-us was nothing to him, but justice was something, and the man Rawdon was an unutterable cad. How Wilkinson could take any pleasure in his society he could not understand. He had a good mind to chuck the dominie's stick into the next creek and let it float to Jericho. He did throw it away along the road, but Muggins brought it back. Deserted by his bosom friend for a common, low down cad like that; Oh, by Jove! He strode along in silence, while Muggins, his only friend, came and rubbed himself against his leg. No, he would not give in to fate in the shape of a Rawdon. He had important secrets regarding the welfare of two women, that Providence seemed to have thrown in his way, in his possession. If Wilks turned traitor, he could break the pact, and make one of these women happy. Pity he wasn't a Turk to take care of the pair of them. Night had fallen, but the moon shone out and the stars, and it was very pleasant walking, if only Wilkinson would give the least hint that he was conscious of his friend's existence. But the schoolmaster was happy with the mining adventurer, who knew his man well enough to mix a few fossils with the grinstuns.