



(A SKETCH)
By Walton S. Smith.

Baines was a young lawyer; he had no practice to speak of but he had great hopes of getting on eventually and he was very fond of speaking of his ultimate success. The world's opinion of him and his prospects was assured; surely that was one step up the glorious but very rugged hill of fame. He had commenced his professional career by a grand coup; he fell on the icy steps of the City Hall and broke his arm, and a prominent newspaper in alluding to the accident had mentioned him as a Rising Barrister. Moreover, he took action against the corporation and won his suit. Was not that a lucky start? Truly the bodily suffering and loss of valuable time occasioned by that same fall were not altogether to be regretted! Baines certainly did not think so; he was very apt to put on a little additional swagger since that occurrence.

But business comes in waves; a period of depression usually follows in the wake of the time of plenty. The date when Baines received payment for the amount of his judgment against the city was also the date when the tide of depression set in.

His business has not been very lucrative of late—in fact he has scarcely earned enough to pay office rent. Yet he has great hopes! Daily he presents himself at a very dingy office and assures himself that affairs will take a turn for the better; and, just as regularly, he departs disappointed. Life is filled with expectations that are very hard to realize!

But Baines was not of the despondent kind; he was a philosopher. He laughed at fate; he did not fight against it. You see he had small private means—it is easy for a man so circumstanced to be a philosopher, to laugh at fate, and, alas, to refrain from fighting against its decree. The last-named is the worst phase in the matter. It is right that a man should not despond; he is lucky if his nature is buoyant enough to allow him to laugh philosophically at misfortune. But success is not likely to be gained by one who refuses to defy that grim antagonist men call fate. Baines did refuse.

He had a very taking way with him, had Baines. His calling made it an easy matter for him to talk against time; and he was also capable of keeping silent. Then, on occasion, he could rise to epigram. A young lawyer who is able to keep silent sometimes is rather a rare specimen of his class. When it is added that this same rare specimen dealt in epigram, the reader will doubtless feel small surprise to learn that certain wiseacres predicted with oracular shakes of heads that were seemingly able to discriminate, that such an extremely clever fellow would come to something. They invariably expressed it that way, these sages. "Come to something" is delightfully comprehensive, and it is very safe; it does not commit the person who makes use of it.

And the individual referred to in these sweet-spoken promises took them all as gospel and held the thoughtless flatterers as people of very sound judgment. Many a career that has given far more cause for bright hope in the future than Baines' has been blasted by just such injudicious flattery. It does away with the ballast which a man should carry to keep him straight in his course through the storms of life.

Baines was a clever fellow—no question about that; and he certainly was good company. But, as has been hinted, he stood in great danger of losing ballast. People spoiled him; they found him so amusing, and they invariably laughed at his jokes. When a man can count on an appreciative audience for his jokes you may be sure that man holds a post of honour. Baines did; he was a social favourite.

Now it came to pass that a certain young lady returned from boarding school to her parents' home. The latter were very wealthy people, and folk were so uncharitable as to add that they were also very purse-proud. Possibly the originators of the last were poor and sensitive. Whenever a person is poor and sensitive he or she is very apt to imagine slights as coming from the rich where none are intended—and they are also very apt to give utterance to these imaginings. Howbeit the young lady in question was launched suddenly into the gay whirl, there to drink deep of the cup of pleasure with other gay whirlers and, it may be, to find therein the bitter dregs which some affirm lie invariably at the bottom of the same. Freda was her name; she was a dark-eyed little mite with hair that somehow always appeared to be terribly disordered, and she had a sharp way of speaking. Beyond that there was little to distinguish her from a hundred other *debutantes*.

However, she made her bow to society and, as a matter of course, Mr. Baines made his bow to her. Time went on ('tis a way it has), and as it sped by it came to be whispered that our Rising Barrister was very attentive to Miss Freda. Yet a little while and it was further reported that the latter's parents were much averse to the growing intimacy. Possibly this was another libel for which certain very poor and sensitive parties were responsible.

Now the events hereinafter chronicled are from a reliable source; it has been deemed politic for that source to remain nameless. This does not throw any doubt on its reliability; it merely manifests the fact that we do not wish to be held responsible for our statements. Our so doing might possibly necessitate our answering impertinent questions, which is a thing we are loth to do.

We were standing on the wharf at Murray Bay one afternoon—possibly it may not have been Murray Bay though, it is some years ago and our bump of locality is almost non-existent. To simplify matters, and at the same time appease our scruples, we shall put it like this:

One afternoon we were on the wharf at one of the many watering-places of the lower St. Lawrence. The steamer had just arrived from Quebec; it is the event of the day to witness the arrival of that steamer. We were enjoying the event of the day. Suddenly our attention was attracted by hearing our name called and, on turning towards the place whence the summons came, we beheld our friend Baines. To be precise, B was not our friend; he was sufficiently intimate to address us by certain approved cognomens and occasionally we sauntered along the street arm in arm with him. But friends of ours, according to the true meaning of the word, he certainly was not.

"So glad to see you!" said Baines, heartily—and he insisted on our driving up to the hotel with him. We agreed unsuspectingly; we are naturally prone to think well of our fellows, but now that we can review the circumstance in the light of subsequent events we fear we must state that Baines was not disinterested in his effusive cordiality. He came to that watering-place with a purpose; he pretended to experience great joy at the sight of us—also with a purpose. And ere long that purpose was disclosed. But, as has been stated, we were without guile, we had no notion of the end which Baines had in view.

He told us that a friend of his had given him the use of his (the friend's) yacht, which was then lying idle at the summer resort where we were. Baines declaimed enthu-

siastically on the subject of yachting, and he had the gift of making people catch his enthusiasm. We are not mariners, but through the magic that was in those soft urgings of our designing companion we became very eager to go down to the sea in ships. So to save space and avoid details—we found ourselves becalmed at a certain obscure settlement some distance down the river. Besides Baines and ourselves there was one small boy on board our yacht. The latter was nominally the cook, in reality he did all the work. We were ignorant of seafaring ways and were debarred from helping on that account, and Baines declared he objected to overmuch exertion when he was out on pleasure. So we lay idly about and made the youngster work.

When we found ourselves becalmed Baines made a great show of disgust, and finally, as if in desperation, proposed a stroll along the beach to while away the time. We assented gladly. There was within us a great longing for terra firma. We were unaccustomed to the vicissitudes of a yachtsman's life and we yearned for elbow room.

All hands were put ashore by the small able-bodied seaman and started to view the town, which was made up of a string of diminutive cottages stretching along the beach.

"Let us walk out to that point," suggested Baines, motioning towards a ridge of rock jutting forth about a quarter of a mile down the coast. "We can see what the chances are for a breeze to better advantage from there," he added.

As the place where we were becalmed was situated at the extremity of a large bay, this proposition seemed a natural one. We did not then dream of the design the proposer had in view, so we agreed unhesitatingly. When we reached that point and had an uninterrupted survey of the open sea, it was quite calm, and, so far as our companion's trained eye could read the tokens that were in the cloudless sky, there was every probability of the state of the weather remaining unchanged.

We all swore a little. We will be just and admit that Baines may have been sincere in his maledictions, (all things are open to doubt) but we are far from being positive. Indeed, we are convinced that he was not. As for ourselves, we are diplomatic; we thought we were expected to be down in the mouth; it is policy to try to live up to that which people expect from you, so we swore right heartily.

When we had all eased our minds, we lit our pipes and smoked. It was hot, but there chanced to be a shady spot handy, and thither we repaired.

Then—we never could account for it—an unprecedented thing happened. Baines was amusing himself by picking up stones and throwing them into the water. We recollect him as sitting on a rock a few yards from where we were lying. Our position was cool and very comfortable; there was a huge boulder immediately overhead which shaded us from the sun and we were stretched at full length on the sand. Then the ceaseless wash of the waves must have made us drowsy. We remember wondering fitfully why those waves continued so long after the breeze had died out. It is our impression that we made some remark about them to our more energetic companion; howbeit our next moment of consciousness was vaguely to fancy we could hear the murmuring sound of voices near at hand. Instinctively we cocked our ears—at least we bestirred ourselves languidly to listen. As we have never actually seen a person cock up his or her ears, we withdraw the expression, and presume we ought not to have used it so positively.

The murmuring sound gradually became distinct. And this is a full account of what we heard as we lay there in that blissful state which is not sleep, and is yet certainly far removed from wakefulness:—

Manly voice which strangely resembled that of Mr. Baines—"And have I come only to hear this?"

Strange, thrilling female voice—"I did not tell you to come. Why have you come?"

Manly voice—"Because I wanted to see you—because I am a fool, I suppose."

Female voice—"Te, he, he!"

Manly voice, reproachfully—"Now you are laughing at me!"

Then a pause, during which we fell asleep. We were aroused again to hear the manly voice declaim as follows:—

"By what right does anyone call me a ne'er-do-weel? I am young and have a profession—I suppose my chances are as good as the next. If I promise to work hard will you wait for me?"

Strange female voice—"Certainly not."

"You won't?"

"No."

"Humph!"