



SCARED OF THE DOG!

CARON—"Don't be afraid, gentlemen, I've got him safe enough for the present."

[“Sir Adolphe Caron moved the adjournment of the debate on Mr. Flint's motion in favor of a Prohibition law with the obvious purpose of preventing it from coming up again this session.”—*Montreal Witness*.]



OR, THE HUMAN ELEMENT IN MATHEMATICS.

THE student of Arithmetic who has mastered the first four rules of his art, and successfully striven with money-sums and fractions, finds himself confronted by an unbroken expanse of questions known as problems. These are short stories of adventure and industry with the end omitted, and though betraying a strong family resemblance, are not without a certain element of romance.

The characters in the plot of a problem are three people called A, B and C. The form of the question is generally somewhat of this sort:—

“A, B and C do a certain piece of work. A can do as much work in one hour as B in two, or C in four. Find how long they work at it.”

Or thus:—

“A, B and C are employed to dig a ditch. A can dig as much in one hour as B can dig in two and B can dig twice as fast as C. Find how long, etc., etc.”

Or after this wise:—

“A lays a wager that he can walk faster than B or C. A can walk half as fast again as B, and C is only an indifferent walker. Find how far, and so forth.”

The occupations of A, B and C are many and varied. In the older arithmetics they contented themselves with doing “a certain piece of work.” This statement of the case, however, was found too sly and mysterious, or possibly lacking in romantic charm. It became the fashion to define the job more clearly and set them at walking matches, ditch digging, regattas, and piling cord wood. At times they become commercial and enter into partnership, having, with their old mystery, a “certain” capital. Above all they revel in motion. When they tire of walking matches, A rides on horseback or borrows a bicycle and competes with his weaker-minded associates on foot. Now they race on locomotives; now they row; anon they become historical and engage stage coaches; or peradventure they are aquatic and swim. If their occupation is actual work they prefer to pump water into cisterns, two of which leak through holes in the bottom and one of which is watertight. A, of course, has the good one; he also takes the bicycle, and the best locomotive, and the right of swimming with the current. Whatever they do, they put money on it, being all three dead-game sports. A always wins.

In the early chapters of the arithmetic, their identity is concealed under the names John, William and Henry, and they wrangle over the division of marbles. In Algebra they are often called X, Y and Z. But these are only their christian names and they are really the same people.

Now to one who has followed the history of these men through countless pages of problems, watched them in their leisure hours dallying with cordwood, and seen their panting sides heave in the full frenzy of filling a cistern with a leak in it, they become something more than mere symbols. They appear as creatures of flesh and blood, living men