

A PERSONALLY CONDUCTED TRIP

[The following story is from the pen of the clever sketch writer, Madge Robertson, wife of Dr. Watt, Victoria, and is reprinted from *Storiettes*, a New York publication, with the permission of that gifted authoress.]

On the northern shore of Lake Ontario, where the sky melts blue into bluer water, and there are white streaks in the thunderclouds, there is an old young town. It lived its life out half a century ago, when the through line from Montreal made a brief halt and built bridges and hopes and other things. Then it slumbered the quiescent sleep of the aged, until some breathless Americans came across the lake and the summer hotel arose. Presently, one or two people allowed the overflow from the hotel to stream into their fine old homes, and incidentally made a little money out of the summer boarder.

One man succeeded in making a very great deal. It was generally suspected that he had dug elsewhere than into the luxuriant pockets of the transient American. At all events, it was an open secret that he was pretty well fixed, even for a city man; and further—and hereby hangs our present tale—that he was not averse to entering into any speculation not noticeably at variance with his church membership.

It happened that the man fell ill. Both well and ill he answered to the name of Burnet. But a day early in the present year found him convalescent and in the dreamy contented condition of an unaccustomed invalid who knows that a day or so will see him about as well as ever. He was lying in bed, watching through the window an ice-boat skimming across the bay, when a visitor was announced.

"Dineen?" said Mr. Burnet, thoughtfully. "Do not remember anyone of that name. Might as well see the fellow, I suppose. Jane, show up the Italian gentleman."

Jane, like Tennessee's partner's young woman, smiled and retired, to reappear in a second or so with the stranger.

"Mr. Burnet?" the latter said hesitatingly.

The invalid promptly assured him that he was not mistaken, whereupon Mr. Dineen looked considerably dismayed.

"Then I am afraid I must apologize," he said. "You are not the gentleman I expected to see. My friend is an older man. You will pardon me?"

Mr. Burnet naturally wanted to know how the mistake had arisen. The stranger explained. He had been staying in C—— at the Arlington; had heard Mr. Burnet's illness spoken of; and had a friend of the same name who rattled near here somewhere; and had, perhaps foolishly, jumped to the conclusion that

here was his long-lost friend. He was greatly disappointed, and much distressed at his intrusion.

"Not at all, not at all! Mr.—ah—Dineen," begged his host. "Take a chair."

The stranger, after a becoming show of reluctance, did so. And presently the conversation drifted about the odd mistake.

"It is a great disappointment," Mr. Dineen averred again, regretfully. "My Burnet was a close chum in the old days—was my partner mining in Mexico, in fact; and now I have a special reason for wanting to find him."

The invalid manifested a satisfactory degree of curiosity as to the reason for the quest, and Mr. Dineen unfolded, by degrees, a mighty interesting narrative.

He had recently returned from an extended visit to Mexico, a pleasant jaunt through all his old haunts, and while there had run across a Mexican who gave him some valuable information. He (Mr. Dineen) had some surgical skill, and had been able to set a broken limb for the Mexican, and hence had won the fellow's everlasting regard; hence also the information.

The "tip" he had thus received concerned, in fact—Mr. Burnet would understand this was strictly confidential—a wonderful find—an old gold mine, in short, the existence of which was generally held to be a myth, although dozens of attempts had been made to find it. The Mexican, however, gave him positive proof that the mine not only existed and was as rich as it had been fabulously reported, but further, that he himself knew how to get at it. Further still, he would reveal its locality for the sum—trifling when you consider the amount at stake—of \$15,000. The Mexican, it seemed, had a filial soul, and wished to maintain his old mother in comfort so long as she lived. Now, Mr. Dineen had no money himself—was born that way, and through lavish generosity of his gains was still that way; but his old-time partner—his host's namesake—had plenty, and he had only to find him to get all he wanted and make an immense fortune for them both.

"I brought the Mexican up here to Canada, too," continued Mr. Dineen gloomingly, "and he's out there in the woods now back of Kingston—always used to living outdoors, you see,—guarding two bars of gold which came from the mine. If I could only get hold of that man Burnet, or anybody else with a bit of ready money! Perhaps you might know, sir, of some man about here with sense enough to know a good thing when he sees it?"

Mr. Burnet could not say he did exactly. Any man would require a good deal of guarantee about a thing of that kind.

"That's so," agreed Mr. Dineen.

Then he drew his chair a little nearer the bed.

"I'll tell you what I'd be willing to do," he said impressively. "I would take a man down there, at my expense, and show him the Mexican, and let him have the gold tested. And then he can go into it or not, just as he likes. Now there couldn't be anything fairer than that, could there?"

The upshot is natural. Mr. Burnet's speculative turn of mind rose to the occasion, and a few days later he accompanied his chance visitor to Kingston. They put up at the best hotel in the place, and early next morning drove out to prospect Mr. Dineen's grateful Mexican and his hidden treasure. Back of a swamp to the north of Kingston they found him, camping out. His appearance and all carried out faithfully the picture with which Mr. Burnet had been presented. He wore a wide sombrero, leggings, and such apparel as Mexicans are commonly pictured to us in, spoke no English, and, at Mr. Dineen's instigation, exhibited his gold. The huge bars were a revelation to Mr. Burnet, and he desired a test made at once. Nothing was easier, Mr. Dineen declared, and the gold was plugged, and the plugged part brought back to Kingston. Here, however, an unexpected difficulty presented itself. There was no assayer in Kingston. Matters thus came to a standstill, and would have continued so but for the lucky chance of Mr. Dineen's getting into conversation, in the smoking-room, with a man who, a stranger like themselves, was staying at their hotel. This gentleman turned out to be an assayer from Washington, D. C., and, when informed that his present companions were in need of his services, kindly volunteered them.

The assay was made—a very elaborate one—and presently the assayer was able to give the pleasant result that the gold was first-class. Things now looked very bright, and an adjournment was at once made to express their satisfaction in the usual way. The assayer congratulated them both heartily; but Mr. Burnet, being now a well man and quite wide awake, thought that he ought to have some days to think it over.

"Sure," replied Mr. Dineen, expressively; and it's but one conclusion you will come to."

The assayer wished that he had the money and the chance. He would require exactly two seconds to think it over. However, Mr. Burnet was firm, and he promised to let Mr. Dineen hear from him in a few days.

The remainder of the time in Kingston was passed very pleasantly. They drove about Kingston, visited its military

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