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BILL NYE'S UMBRELLA

He tries to identify himself and turns out to be somebody else.

Last week in company with my family and about 80,000 other people, I paid a visit to the great industrial exposition at Minneapolis.

It is a great triumph of mind over matter. There, on the east bank of the great parent of waters, by which team I would imply the Mississippi river, and just to and overlooking Col. St. Anthony's justly celebrated falls, stands a building costing \$250,000, full of the products of every clime, and all prepared in eighty-three days. It filled me with wonder, as it must any one who views it thoughtfully and from a purely unpartisan point of view.

Less than three months ago, when the morning sun rose reluctantly over the elms of the east side and looked down upon several acres of unimproved real estate, and a broad sweep of wet saw logs, flecked with cream-colored boys wearing nothing but an air of defiance for the police, now a magnificent building faces the turbulent tide, and people from the four quarters of the globe jostle each other to the wild music of the Mexican band, while ever and anon a large and expensive fountain is dreamily squirting its rhythmic squirt.

Everywhere science and art are visible. Here in the new west, where Minnie Haha but a few fleeting years ago strained maple syrup through a pillow sham, the paleface wanders through acres of beautiful and useful articles, the offspring, I may say, of tireless hands and throbbing brains all over the universe.

Here where the warrior wooed his mahogany mate, and the papoose seemed indigenous to the soil, people from Farther India, and Erin Prairie, Wis., come to listen to the passionate notes of the Mexican band and stab their umbrellas into the old masters.

A large policeman at the door of the art gallery, in harsh tones, requested me to deposit my umbrella with a young woman. I did it, for I respect a policeman wherever I meet him. Some of them are strangers to me, but they are generally men whose advice it is well to heed. Had it not been for these men I do not know where I would have been to-day—thousands of miles from here, perhaps.

He told me afterward that he had to stop people from carrying their canes and umbrellas into the art department because thoughtless visitors now and then jabbed a hole in an \$18,000 painting, and it delayed the exposition, when they had to wait for a Minneapolis artist to paint another one. He also stated that excited people poked the statuary with their canes and knocked off the drapery.

So I left my umbrella at the check room, for I did not wish to delay the exhibit while new overcoats were being prepared for the revised statutes.

When I came back the young woman took my check, and as my radiant smile burst upon her and lit up that end of the building, she became embarrassed, dropped the check on the floor, where it mingled with the redeemed checks, and when I asked for my umbrella she looked at me with eyes like a startled codfish and murmured:

"What umbrella?"
Time was gliding swiftly by and I wanted to see some other things besides the umbrella exhibit, so I got over the counter to show her which one was mine. To jump over a counter is but the work of a moment with me. I am tall, athletic and easy in my movements, so I got over readily.

It seemed to surprise her and startle her. I learned afterward that it was not customary to climb over the counter in order to identify goods.

But she would not give up the umbrella. She wanted it herself, no doubt. I do not blame her, for it is a good one, and has the name of James Whitcomb Riley engraved on the silver plate of the handle.

That is the way I identify it.
She wanted me to identify myself. I thought of showing her my pass to the exposition, but I decided not to do so because I went in on another man's pass, so I told her that if she would send a male attendant with me to an adjoining room I would demonstrate to the practical eye by certain embossed hieroglyphics on my linen that I was the man I passed myself off as.

A young man, who is an attache of the building, accompanied me.

I succeeded in convincing him that my linen was marked Amos J. Walker, Indianapolis, Ind.

I did not again demand the umbrella. It has only been about two years since I began to conform to this umbrella habit, and to revel in its false joys, and I know that I was happier and more contented when I did not wear one than I have ever been since.

Some would have lost their tempers, but I did not. I was a perfect gentleman throughout. I thought I succeeded in convincing the most skeptical that, no matter how signally the young lady may have failed in that respect, I was a gentleman.

I thought so, at least, until I was going through the hardware exhibit about an hour later, when I heard a spectator say to the owner of the hardware:

"Here comes the party that's claiming to be Bill Nye, the humorous writer, and just tried to nip an umbrella that belongs to J.W. Riley. Watch your cook stoves and keep your eye on the hot-air furnaces till he goes away."

It seems to me that wealth certainly brings with it a degree of care and responsibility and heartache that poorly recompenses one for the long, hard struggle. And how much of comfort, too, we yield in our mad efforts to appear well in society. Had I still clung to my simple ways, instead of aping the wealthy and straining every nerve to wear an umbrella far above my station how much happier I might have been.—Bill Nye in Boston Globe.



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