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WAIFS.

BY CARROLL RYAN.

There are quite and convenient nooks along the highways of the world, where one who delights in observing human life and character, can post himself for the enjoyment of a pleasing, yet often melancholy study of his fellow beings. If we are, as the Jew Raphael in Kingsley's *Hypatia* conceived, merely parasites infesting the carcasses of old mother Earth, it must be conceded that, even as such, we are worthy of attention if only for the gratification of a natural historian's curiosity. In the present age of the world to doubt seems to be a ruling passion in the minds of all who take the trouble to think; nor can we blame doubt which leads to inquiry, that in turn, leads to the establishment of what is true and the overthrow of the false. If we were to judge the present generation phrenologically we would say that the "bump" or faculty of veneration is sadly deficient, and that in consequence, as a whole, we are not inclined to honor anything merely because it is venerable. In fact we are all becoming radicals, and it makes very little difference whether we wear yellow or blue if we are partisans, it is not for principle but interest.

It is not, however, my intention in the present paper to enter upon the merits of the question involved in the foregoing. Social science is not, as yet, very deeply studied in the Dominion; we are all too busy one with his business, and another with his trade or farm, to give much heed to anything of ideal importance. The grand question is pork and flour; after we have settled that we can take to abstractions. In the meantime it may be permitted to one who loves an oddity as dearly as Johnson did a paradox or Shakespeare a pun, to bestow an hour's attention upon the waifs of humanity. Those who by choice or circumstance have become absolved from anything like what we call "having an object," but who, content with things, as they are, allow themselves to float serenely over the sea of life, enjoying their little share of sunshine perfectly indifferent to everybody and everything, that does not come within their own sphere of suffering and enjoyment. In the class with which we are at present dealing we do not include your sleek well-to-do citizen who is always sure of his dinner, and can come down magnificently with five or twenty dollars for every public charity. These may drift along serenely enough, nobody would dream of wasting time upon them. But when the real waif of humanity—the stray sheep of a flock that is never gathered in a fold—comes in contact with one of these, how amusing it is to note the way in which he is regarded. Doubt not unmingled with fear, and assumed disdain on the one side, indifference allied to contempt on the other; for your veritable waif is always a man of ability, who has chosen to be a Bohemian because he considers the world has no prize worth the trouble of his winning. Like Ulysses, the prince of vagabonds, he may contend with a Cyclop for life or an Iberian bully for a dinner, but is perfectly incapable of using his advantage any further than the circumstances actually require. "Why should I relieve him of a burthen I must carry myself?" was the remark of one of these when asked why he did not knock a certain truculent scoundrel on the head. And why blame the Waif for expressing a feeling, not unknown to the

best of men, when they experience a remote sort of satisfaction in sufferings which do not affect themselves? Sometimes these waifs come together, as in the time of the first French revolution, and suddenly find themselves endowed with power, like Mirabeau; a startling theory is advanced, they instantly clench it and disappear, leaving others to undo the disagreeable knot in which they have tied their foolish necks. Like Sir John Smith, the darling of romance, they may roam from nation to nation, lending a helping hand to everybody in a scrape, with constitutions that defy abuse and heads impervious to blows. Or like Garibaldi, they may kick down thrones and principalities and go back to cultivating cabbages. Like Homes, they may sing the grandest of songs to the herd who gape, applaud, drop a penny in the hat and think they patronize art; while the waif goes his way rejoicing that he has wherewithal to purchase a dinner.

These are all well enough in the highways of life and the world; but in the back lanes heaped up in the byways among discarded boots, oyster shells and broken bottles, we find the skulls and bones, the wreck and debris of the lost and unreturning. Stumbling amongst these, the philosophical scavenger rakes up many an odd memento of the departing, for the skull and bones are animate if you possess the power to charm them into speech. By deduction you might draw from them many a moral lesson, but moral lessons are the hardest to teach poor humanity. And in this respect Hamlet's dissertation on the scone of Yorick was but a grim travesty of the manderings of the grave-digger.

Those who are blest in the possession of home and kindred, with all the tender and absorbing cares and duties thereof, can hardly realize what it is to be a cosmopolitan in life and thought. The habit of mind produced by much wandering up and down the thoroughfares of life, is calculated to force a man upon himself, and thus we often find that those who may be said to live upon the highway, and the streets are the least known or understood. Perhaps we find occasionally in some out of the way corner, enjoying the grateful shade of some happy chance, that has secured him from the companionship of the old boots, oyster shells &c., one of these waifs from the huge drift of humanity, who, like Uncle Toby, lives the past again; builds up anew the castle walls that tested his youthful prowess and complacently knocks them down again between whiffs of tobacco smoke. But, alas for the wandering fraternity, these instances are rare; the greater number die like birds and none can tell where they rest in death who never rested in life. Waifs may be divided into two great classes—those who are waifs by choice, and those who are waifs by necessity. The former are the heroes of chivalry, romance and adventure, the latter are the true "floating population" of great cities and great armies; poor devils who have been pitchforked into existence, nobody knows from whence and nobody cares; who are as free from the thralldom of fixed ideas as it is possible for men to be, and who are altogether above prejudice of any sort. They will share their dinner and their purse with you, and make up for it by levying on the next one they meet. They are to be met with everywhere, and though always idle themselves, yet they give employment to many. For instinctively the industrious and well-to-do, shrink from contact with them; but they have an offset to this in the pitying smiles of that portion of the human family, which is constitutionally prone to

love the unfortunate. Your true waif is above all considerations, which rest upon forms of government and religion. In Rome he would "do as the Romans do," in Mecca he would kneel at the shrine of the Prophet. He is a republican or Tory as it suits the times or his convenience, except in a revolution then he always goes with the mob, and is the ugliest customer you could meet with at a barricade. He is the best companion you could have on a tramp, and the most amusing stray acquaintance on the steamboat or cars.

I once came across an excellent type of the class, in the person of Henrich Betzer, who had a singularly handsome face, illustrated by a diagonal cut from the right temple to the left corner of his mouth, which he bore as a memento of his *Alma Mater*, in some antediluvian university town of Germany. A musician of no mean order, he fiddled his way through life joyously, caring little how the world wagged, until like "old Uncle Ned" he one day hung up his fiddle and his bow, and slept out of the world no one knew how. Many others I have met and many I meet continually, they are the repeating decimals of the arithmetic of life. And are we not all of us more or less like them, waifs upon a great stream, which is bearing us we know not whither? They are pictures of ourselves, elaborated on one or two points, but the likeness exists nevertheless. Therefore let us not be too severe upon these Arabs. In some far off land, perhaps we can remember, there is one very dear to us, who may be amongst the voriest of waifs. There are black sheep in every flock. Let us then, for the sake of the great waifs who are beloved by the world, and the small waifs beloved by ourselves, be kind to those of the fraternity who may be cast upon our thresholds. A kindly act done him may awaken at the antipodes a corresponding thrill for one we love.

"Cosa fatta capo ha."

and a reward.

NAPOLEON THE GREAT.—Sir Neil Campbell, who escorted Napoleon to Elba, and remained there as British Resident in 1814, says—"Madame Mere (Napoleon's mother) told me that Napoleon was first intended for the navy and studied for it at Brienne. She went to see him there, and found they all slept in hammocks, upon which she prevented him pursuing that line. "My boy," she said, "in the navy you have to contend against land fire and water." The masters at Brienne reported that he would make an excellent sea officer. As Admiral Bonaparte he would have had little scope for his ambition compared with that which he possessed as General, first Consul, and Emperor.

It is said that Lord Monck, late Governor General of Canada, is about to bring before Parliament the present condition of the military forces of the United Kingdom, with the view of suggesting means for improving the efficiency, diminishing its cost, and securing more thorough co-operation between the active and reserved branches of the army. His Lordship is understood to attach great importance to the discipline and organization of the Militia and Volunteers.

An English journal, says, a swift unarmored iron corvette called the "Active," has just been launched, which is intended to form one of a fleet of fast cruisers, which would in the event of war be employed to destroy the commercial marine of an enemy, and to protect our own. The "Active's" minimum full power speed is 15 knots an hour.