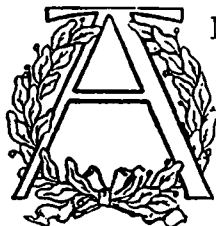


Blob Tisha & Co.

A Tale of Two Runaways.

I.



N odd, a very odd name is "Blob Tisha." How Bob Brogan became metamorphosed into Blob Tisha the story will show in due course. Since the practical joke of his re-christening got abroad, nobody but Mike thinks of calling him by other than his nickname, and even Mike so calls him behind his back. Bob has made the use of this sobriquet the *casus belli* of three fights, scoring one victory when he defeated Mike and getting badly used up on the other two occasions when there was a preponderance of avoirdupois on the side where right is spelled with an "m." Yet the name stuck with a tenacity that in time engendered familiarity, and this, the philosophers tell us, breeds contempt. As Bob has long ceased to resent or repudiate identification as Blob Tisha, I may be pardoned for taking a liberty sanctioned by public usage.

While this story is not wholly true as to names and places, who will say that it is entirely fictitious? Certainly not the writer. Gather together where you will eight thousand lads, and you may be sure of having among them the material for "all sorts and conditions of men," which phrase includes one or more specimens of the nomadic tribe who nightly pitch their moving tent a day's march nearer nowhere. Rolling stones may not gather any moss, if by this term money and social position are meant; but they do, as a rule, accumulate experience of one kind and another which, from its variety, sensation, humour and discomfort, makes life a kaleidoscope of perplexing transformations.

Bob was one of those artful dodgers who might or might not have been born at some period of his life, but whose habitual trickery would warrant the suspicion that he slipped into existence in some manner other than lawful. He was not really wicked; there was nothing of the felon or sneak in his make-up. He was rather a "cute cuss," who had such a contempt for conventionality that it was part of his erratic code of conduct to have a way of doing things entirely his own. He was unique. Others might have reasons for a course of action, others might look before they leap; what was that to him? When he was struck with a novel idea, having no patience for theorizing, he put it into practice forthwith and paid the piper on demand without a murmur, his elasticity under misfortune, like that of a rubber doll, asserting itself as soon as the pressure was relaxed. Bob "bobbed up serenely" after every mishap, unsubdued and eager for a fresh adventure. "Singe the whiskers of the man in the moon?" "Why, certainly; come on!" "But the man in the moon has no whiskers." "Never mind; come on. We'll find that out when we get there." This would be about the nature and extent of his "reasoning" prior to an escapade.

How he came to forsake his nightly "doss" in Flowery Dean Street for a clean, comfortable bed in Dr. Barnardo's Labour House, Mr. Owen knows; I don't. It was a fresh experience, and that was something enticing. But how he got out to Canada it is easy to guess. So much work in a given time and the regular routine of the Labour House were too much for Bob. Not that he was lazy—oh, no. He would work like a beaver, provided he could work when and how he chose, with plenty of variety, which was indeed to him the spice of life. Spice!—he could make a meal of it three times a day. That is to say, he had a taste for things hot and piquant, and liked to flavour one change with another to