VARIOUS TRAMP SIGNALS.

How the "Hobos" Mark Fences and Gate Posts.

Pictures of Experience Left Behind for Those Who Can Come After—Worth—Strictly Business Cards.

There are sermons in stones, books in the brooks and chapters in gate posts, board fences and other prominent features in the landscape of a territory through which tramps delight to lay out their itineraries, says the Washington Star. There is no poetry in the cabalistic language with which the knights of the road smooth the pathway of their brethren who may come after them with an unerring course of directions about the people who permanently settle along by it. All is prose, and meaning prose at that. There is none of the grace usual in literature; none of the high lights of sentiment. The phrasing is unknown and ragged; the mode of follows has neither rime nor rhythm. It may consist of a single word or a rough, uncouth outline of the kind of a dog. But despite all its shortcomings, from a literary standpoint, it is so full of meaning to the vagabonds who roll of hunger and thirst, and those sad symptoms are what it largely deals with.

The hard-fisted who lives isolated in the country or in a more gregarious manner in a suburban neighborhood knows a good deal more about the tramp genus than the dwellers in cities, but to a great majority of instances he doesn't know half enough. If he did he'd keep a big, fat tempered dog with a hearty appetite and would feed him only once a day and leave him free to roam about the premises at his own sweet will. When such an animal is seen curveting about the front yard of a suburban dwelling with blood in his eye and half a yard of red tongue hanging out of a tooth-filled cavern of devastation it is safe to bet that the person living there is a past grand master in the knowledge of tramps.

There are a few of us—of rather few such people, however, because the human heart is a pretty tender thing, and it shocks most of them to see a poor man and an indignant dog mix up suddenly in a swift scrimmage in event without any fault in the number of rounds. Consequently, such soft-hearted individuals feel a great pang of pity when a shiftless, tattered, ragged fellow comes shuffling up to the door and tells a doleful tale about having lived on a biscuit and a half for seventy-two hours. Then they feel him down, go to the pantry and bring out cold ham and light bread and sardines and crackers and milk and preserves and fill the hungry visitor until he distends like the pouch of a small boy's crying bellows.

The chances are that a first experience of this kind on the part of a suburban house-holder will be followed by another and another, the visitors being only different in their persons and the degree of their dilapidation. Their points of hunger are almost identical, and the revenue gains with which they interview the provender that is set before them precisely the same.

The diurnal procession of such callers is liable to suggest a charitable entertainer of them all to ramunate on the immense amount of poverty caused by the depression of business, and he will expatiate to his friends upon the immense number of honest workingmen going through the country in search of employment, illustrating his statements with allusions to the hungry-handed sons of toil who have called at his own house and told some pitiful stories of hardship and ill fortune.

Of course, this is all very apparent to the unsuspecting resident of the incidents, but other suburbanites could have told him that the supposed unfortunate workmen were simply professional tramps, who had become aware of his kindheartedness and were playing a tune upon his heartstrings with consummate cleverness. The old suburbanite would have told him that he would have never seen another tramp if he had given the biscuit-and-a-half-seventy-two-hour starver two minutes to get off the premises in the first place, instead of all that bread and meat and preserves and other things. Why? Because as sure as that man finished his repast, simulated humble gratitude and shambled off into the road he proceeded to leave lisingly pillars upon some prominently displayed surface like a gate post, fence rail or flat, stationary rock along the roadside near the entertainer's house, which conveyed to every other tramp coming that way that good cheer in profusion awaited his seeing at yonder kitchen door.

If the first comer had been fired out or chewed up by the dog, what then? He would have left an inoffensive warning to that effect in the same manner that would have caused all his brethren who might follow to quicken their steps in passing such a dangerous dwelling.

That is the language spoken of at the beginning of this article—the language of the great army of wayfarers make an immunity, derelicts to the path of decency, who neither toil nor spin, who are too cowardly to shed when there is any possible chance of their forcibly personal danger and who confine their depredations largely to the lunch baskets of thinkers, school children, and who shuffle up and down the back streets and alleys of cities preying on the sympathies of the philanthropic and on the chicken sympathy of the other messes.

The tramps have a system of signs and signals which they leave to their followers and which are understood by every member of the multitude which is scattered within their fraternity. A small diamond-shaped mark drawn on a fence or gate post near a house is a challenge to the crew of Mr. Mr. Hobo of Hungry Hence. It means that the residents are full of the milk of human kindness and will give food to poor wayfarers when—And without question.

The simple sign of the cross on the other hand warns the tramp to pass the house, as the occupants are cold and unsympathetic, and have no use to take to the claims of poverty, either real or assumed.

The triangle pointed downward indicates that the house it refers to has been recently visited by tramps and that to people may have brought relief to the stricken wants in the pantry and pattern, but that to Earn would come from a visit.

A cross within a circle suggests a proper time of probable to him Mr. Hobo, good luck, [illegible] for go to the house and be a Samaritan minded sinner of a non religious turn and speak of holy things, and assure him that such hypocrisy will be well repaid by the truly pious people within. A square with one corner cut off makes the sign of trans-mutation. It means that the house is night is occupied by people who believe in the dignity of labor and that if he wishes to get assistance from them he must work for it. There are only a few cases on record where a tramp has approached a house pointed out by such a mark and these prove that sudden insanity does not eliminate smoking causes in attaching money. He also makes a dollar around the house, whose gate post or fence is decorated by a square having a dot in the center. This means that the premises are patrolled by one of the dogs horrible-note aforesaid. There are numerous other signs used, and there are words and phrases, too, in the silent language of the tramps, and the attention readers of the Star might take a glance at their fences and find out with the key given above just how they stand in the estimate of the men who never work.

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