

WAKEMAN'S WANDERINGS.

LONDON, Jan. 2, 1893. I found him all alone at a table in a snaz little restaurant of shadowy Mercery Lane at ancient Canterbury. He was a mite of a thing, but an old young lad, seemingly already broken by all the sorrows of desolated old age. His attire was rich, but his back was humped, his legs were crooked and spindled, his cheeks were sunken and his eyes were crossed and queer. Tears were silently trickling down his face. I could not eat my food until I had asked him if he was in trouble.

"Oh, sir," he said in the sweetest tones I ever heard from a boy's lips, and as if completely overcome by his situation and unexpected human sympathy, "I wish I was dead and buried!" Pressing him for further explanation, with the hope of allaying his childish troubles, he continued in a scared, hunted way: "I am lord——, they tell me. But I never saw my father. My mother is a beautiful lady, but they only let me see her once a year; and then she cries and I cry, and it is dreadful when she goes away."

"May be you saw nurse Digby? Nurse Digby minds me, and they make me live with her, and say she must keep me until I am a great lord. But she drinks and beats me. She's drinking to-day, sir, and I'm sure she'll almost kill me. Oh, sir, do take me to America, and let me be plain and rough and happy like all the boys I see!—There she is, sir! Please, please don't tell her, sir!"

As he piteously spoke a huge mountain of flesh slid down a stairway and reeled into the room. It was nurse Digby. Her dress was disheveled, her wrappings were upside down, her hat, a tossing sea of feathers and flowers, was very much awry. She was more than "cheery." She had passed the quarrelsome stage of drink into the region of bland beatitude. In a moment we fortunately got the best of her native suspicion and cunning; she embraced me as a reward for suppositious friendliness; and it was somehow made clear that little milord had been brought down from London, ostensibly for a "houting" and to visit the cathedral but in reality that nurse Digby might revel, with such as she, in the brave brews of fair, hop-laden Kent.

"Shz'are's a dear!" she blubbered, in turn talking upon little milord in imbecile protestation of affection. "Digby'll stan' by a dear agin' zworld—Sho sh' will; d(hic!)arling m'lord! A sousesan' sholdiers couldn' part ush—not hunner sousesan', phretty (hic!) dearl Gen'p'm' shears me (hic!) swhear it!" Then nurse Digby fell in a mass upon her charge; the little nobleman shrieked with fright and pain; and his tormentor rolled into a comfortable ball beneath the table.

Casting all thought of my own visit to the cathedral aside, I at once summoned a carriage; got the deformed boy and nurse Digby into it; drove through the quaint old city up the winding hill to the railway station; and never left the ill-assorted pair until I had seen them safely in the carriage of a London-bound train. But I can never forget that poor lad's pleadings that I should rescue him from the living death of his hopeless environment, and his white, desperate face, as he crouched in his seat like a scoured soul, still appealing while watching the human animal, his endless

tormentor, as she lay in temporary harmlessness upon the compartment floor.

"Oh, sir, I shall remember you, if I live to be a great lord!" were his last words that I heard as the train rolled away. The hopeless tragedy it all revealed has never left my heart; and all that sunny afternoon in old Canterbury town, the brasses and effigies of the great cathedral could only be half discerned through the mists of ever-gathering tears.

If your travels ever bring you along the highways and byways of Brittany, you must never expect hospitality of the peasant people. It is the only foreign land in which I have wandered on foot where the stranger, and especially the American stranger, is not welcome among lowly folk with unquestioning cordiality and an almost affectionate regard.

Call at a roadside cottage in Brittany and ask for food and a night's shelter and the whole family will crowd into the door to obstruct your passage. Then they will silently and sullenly look you over. Whither from? Whither bound? If a foreigner, they are even shrewd enough to demand your passport. No vagabond, deserter, nor ticket-of-leave man will they harbor. Finally assured you are none of these, they set about bargaining for the last sou they can wring from you. The food you are to get to the very color of the coffee is set powerfully against your money. Their own poverty, their bewildering number of children, the lonely road to the nearest village inn, the fact that at the next cottage they would probably murder as well as take you in; all and much more is set forth to make your bargain a hard one. So, too, the toothless old peasant hag mother while eyeing you askance, croons to her husband a running fire of objections to the arrangement, a few of which set you down to your face as a villainous spy, some wretch that has cheated the gibbet, and certainly no less than the thief of Breton horses who was caught and flogged at the last horse fair at La Folguet.

They are shrewd and canny, these simple folk, and they will make you very miserable until the price is set and paid down in hand, for they will not trust you with the sum until morning, lest your appearance belie your ability to pay, but the lugubrious transaction once settled, and a few sous scattered among the children, which are immediately snatched away and hidden in the farmer's strong box, the atmosphere suddenly changes. You are the guest now. All the inn-keeping politeness, suavity and attention of Paris itself are yours, and until you leave, every soul in the cottage puts every other duty aside to minister unto your wants and comfort.

There is a glib-tongued raven, the pride of a certain otherwise delightful, old-fashioned inn beside Covent Garden, London, much frequented by Americans, against which many of us who have suffered from its ill-timed speculations and maledictions possess feelings far from a benign and friendly character.

The morning after my first arrival at this hostelry, I wished to take an early train for Brighton, and as no one, save costermongers and market porters, is astir in London before eight or nine o'clock, I was compelled to awaken and

get away without the pleasant formality of being called. Anxious to not miss my train, I hastily descended to the office-floor. Here I found the street-door ajar, but the dining-room, the office, the reading-room and apparently all the minor offices were still closed and dark, and no servant what-ever could then be summoned by call of voice or bell.

The idea of leaving the hotel without reporting the fact worried me. I began tiptoeing about in quest of somebody. This of itself impelled a feeling of guilt and dread. I was late, but it occurred to me that I must take along my umbrella. It stood with others in the great hallway leading to the dining-room. I somehow felt like a criminal when approaching that umbrella stand. I fairly trembled lest some suddenly appearing employee should pounce upon me when in the act of abstracting my own umbrella. Scarcely had I got a firm hold of the handle when this fairly shrieked demand rang out beside me:

"Who are you?—who are you?—who are YOU?"

Ichabod Crane when pursued by the Headless Horseman never flew over old Pocantico bridge faster than, startled and dismayed, I plucked out of the place and into the clutches of a Southampton street police officer. Explanations followed, I missed my train, but was formally introduced to the gleefully malignant raven whose station was in the hallway, where at night its cage was covered with some traveler's handy rug.

That is a strange principle of human nature which finds mitigation of our own humiliation in the embarrassment of others, but the same evening I almost forgave the vicious bird for selecting as another victim one of those particularly aggravating American females who prance an scold about the world as professional "agitators." The lady was big and broad and pompous—a familiar figure, I am told, in the New England States. Wherever she moved she proceeded in a series of stately pauses and snorts, as if to say: "I pause that you may have opportunity to fully realize who I am!"

She was passing in this manner through the hallway to the dining room. The raven was evidently impressed and curious. He promptly shouted, almost in her ears.

"Who are you?—who are you?—who are YOU?"

The agitator was agitated. Trembling from rage she wheeled and shouted back to the office force and tittering guests.

"Who am I? Bless me, everybody outside of this disgraceful country knows who I am! This is an outrage. I shall see Minister Lincoln about it!" Then she majestically snorted herself in to dinner.

An irresistible but repressed outburst of laughter followed the contretemps. As it died away I noticed the raven craning its neck to this side and that, and blinking demurely. Then it gave its ugly beak a few smart raps with its claws, sent an unearthly whistle after my disappearing countrywoman, and, as it finally settled itself for a bit of quiet reflection, purred hoarsely but still softly and ruminatively,

"Who are you?—who are you?—who are YOU?"

Speaking of interesting Americans abroad, reminds me of a curious incident of my recent year's wanderings in