

FINDERS AND KEEPERS.

THE PERQUISITES OF THE RAG-PICKER'S PROFESSION.

A Quaint Trad - that Feals with the Flotsam and Jetsam of a Great City - What the World Loses and What the World Finds.



HE carelessness and extravagance of residents of large cities have given rise to a new industry during the past few years, and no better name has been found to designate the followers of this modern avocation than that of "finders." What is a "finder"? You would propound the query indefinitely among the higher ranks of society without obtaining a satisfactory answer, but the reporter or policeman, the average man about town, generally know some-



A RAG-PICKER.

thing of this new and strange class, which probably came into existence in the guise of an indigent tramp or beggar, and has been recruited since from the ranks of ragpickers, garbage-collectors, and the like, until, in a city like Chicago, many thousands make the



CITY DUMPING GROUND.

"finding" business a part of their daily labor.

A finder is a seeker, and a seeker a man who finds. Finds what? A living. Where? In the dust-heap, in the garbage-box, along the streets—above the surface, under the surface—on the water and under the water. Keen eyes, quick hands, a knowledge of trivial values, a further knowledge of the laws of flotsam and jetsam, all the requisites to success in this unique calling, and precocious children, shrewd peddlers, professional junkmen, and vagrants generally comprise the bulk of the class.

At first, the finder began business on



A RICH FIND.

the beach at fashionable watering places. The action of the tide played strange freaks with the valuable stray coins and general articles dropped, thrown away, or lost by frequenters of the sandy shore. What yesterday covered up to-day unearthing, and one professional claimed to have ended a season of keen picking in the sand several hundreds of dollars ahead. The business then spread to the large Eastern cities. At the first break of day the various finders would pursue various routes. Here would be a package dropped from some swift wagon in the darkness, maybe only a whip, a strap, a blanket, a cushion, a milk-can cover, a bag of oats; but all was fish that came to the finder's net, and occasionally a freight or express parcel, a fine silk hat, an overcoat, a pocket-book, a watch, a revolver would reward his vigilance. The gutters were carefully scanned. The scene of a street fight revealed a lost pin or ring; the scene of a robbery, a purse dropped by the thief in his flight. Spectacles, umbrellas, gloves, wraps, and the like were most frequently found near theaters. Stray coins were sure to be obtained along the street-car lines, and the early sweepings from saloons usually panned out more than one sawdust-covered quarter or dime. Soon, however, every thirsty tramp, who was not too busy emptying out stale beer from kegs or robbing clothes-lines in the early dawn, "got onto the racket," as the saying goes, and the streets were pretty well scanned between dawn and sunrise. Then the trade became less lucrative and more systematic and difficult. Various lines developed themselves, and accidental findings were abandoned for a legitimate trade in the seeking line. The eager seeker waiting for daylight found that the work of civilization had denuded his calling of half its original interest. He would hasten forth on his quest to discern his accustomed course already gone over. The street-sweeping

machine had preceded him, and car tracks, gutters and pavement were spick and span as a kitchen floor. Dust, coins and all had been disturbed by the street-sweeper, and wagons had carted away the refuse. Then a regular system of operation was begun by the professional finder. He learned where the city dumping grounds were located. Much like a gold miner, he considered them his own personal claim, but invaders came. A fight or a division of spoil was necessary. The latter system came into vogue, and a visit to the various spots where the refuse of the city is dumped is likely to reward the observer with some very curious sights.

In a great city like Chicago the sweeping of the streets comprise many hundred wagon loads daily. Some of this refuse is loaded on scows that are towed out into the lake, where it is dumped, but most of it is used to fill in abandoned quarries, streets below grade, and the like. The finders' work at a spot being filled up is as business-like as that of a miner. So many people want their front yards filled up with dirt that numerous loads of street dust designed for the dumping grounds never reach their intended destination. This saves time to the cartman, and secures him tobacco money. Most of the stuff, therefore, that reaches the dumping grounds, consists of the contents of ash-boxes, garbage barrels, and the sweepings of alleys. When a load arrives, the gang of pickers, usually numbering about half a dozen, surround the wagon. As soon as the refuse reaches the ground, they begin poking in and out the load, spreading it about, prodding it with their long hooked sticks. One man looks for bones only, another for glass, a third for iron, a fourth for rags, a fifth for paper, a sixth for bottles. Having secured each his portion of the plunder, they adjourn to a spot near by, where they have a roaring fire burning. Surrounding it each man has his heap. If a piece of wood with an iron bolt through it is found, it is placed on the fire. In some loads from hotels some good pieces of food or fruit are found, and this comprises the lunch of the finders. By nightfall they have gathered quite a bagful of truck, often finding such valuables as rings, coins, knives, forks, spoons, dishes, copper bottoms of kettles, and especially scraps of

headquarters, where they may be recovered by the loser. In winter, the street-car barn men reap a rich reward for their perseverance in sifting the hay that is swept out of the cars, and many coins and valuables are lost between the car side and the window.

The nautical finder is the true finder, after all. He is termed a "wharf rat," a "river pirate," a "bird of prey;" but he plies an occupation that calls for hard work and application, all the same. His stamping-ground is the river, his outfit a broad scow, a pair of oars, and some poles, hooks, and ropes. If an anchor is lost he grapples for it, and very often brings up a valuable piece of iron—pulleys, metal, and often a watch or money. The temptation to cut a cable leads him into trouble many times, but the profession includes a fair average of honest workers. Another class fish only for fuel and loose lumber and the like.

Any one may become a finder. A story is told of a boy who found an abandoned horse. He nursed it to health, rigged up a rattle-trap wagon, and started out every day on the quest for building material. He stole nothing, but when he found a dimension stone on the prairie, and in a rut he carted it home. Bricks the same, and piles of lumber.

Resolved. That the gentle, tender-hearted representative of America's upstartdom who has done Chicago, during the last week, the honor to visit it, and has kindly consented to appear before the Socialists to give his views on the industrial situation and recommend a course of treatment warranted to cure in all cases for discontented workers of all nationalities, is hereby entitled to the thanks of this meeting, for voicing in so unmistakable a manner the secret sentiment of the self-styled elite of our great cities in regard to the working classes, and the grievances of which they complain.

Mrs. Woodman then made a long address, in the course of which she said:

"Shoot them like dogs." This is how Mrs. Leslie would have the anarchists treated. It seems strange, does it not, that a woman's lips should utter such words as these? Stranger still, that a woman's heart could beg the thought. Even the coarsest and most cruel men shrink a little from the woman who advocates coarseness and cruelty, and they are right. From woman—the wife, mother, sister, daughter—one naturally expects gentle thoughts and humane sentiments, and so to hear an expression which would do credit to the most illiterate and brutalized officer on Chicago's police force from the lips of one whose beauty and grace have become a household word in the United States cannot fail to have called forth a faint shudder even from so callous an individual as a Chicago newspaper man.

"Shoot them down like dogs! Treat them like mad dogs!" How redundant with refinement, how suggestive of feminine delicacy, purity, and womanly sweetness in this language! Has this woman no children? No; she is childless. She tells you so. "I have no child's stocking to fill with candy and dolls Christmas morning." There is a world of pathos in this thought. After all, with all her wealth of diamonds, she is to be pitied. Had she been a mother perchance she would have thought of the little children left fatherless, of the wives and mothers bereft of their only support, and left to struggle single-handed in consequence of that shameless and infamous execution Nov. 11, which Mrs. Leslie characterizes as 'a brave and wise thing.' As a matter of fact, there are few of Chicago's citizens who are not more worthy candidates for hanging than those were.

"It is a great nation, this," sighed Count Leo Tolstoi, the Russian author, in reality the founder and leader of a new philosophical and religious sect. Although Emile Zola claims that he has only adopted and barbarized the ideas of the French realistic school, he is accepted in Russia as an original thinker and the preacher of a new gospel. The Count comes of an ancient aristocratic family, but he emphasizes his belief in the equality of man by discarding the fashionable trappings of the nobility and adopting a style of dress which is a sort of compromise between the costume of the mousquetaire, or peasant class, and that of the nobles. He wears a loose-fitting black blouse, an ordinary trousers, a wide, brimless slouch hat, and goes without collars, cuffs, or ornaments of any kind.

Tolstoi was born on the estate where he now resides, at Yasnaya Poliana, in Southern Russia, and was educated at the Moscow University. He entered the army and had the same chance of a brilliant career as other young Russian nobles, but his literary tastes and strong convictions gave him an aversion to military life. After filling an important civil function he finally resolved to devote himself to the propagation of his ideas through his books and by personal teaching and example among the peasantry in the neighborhood of his home. He has written numberless works, among the best

tin, which are pounded into a mass to make sash-weights.

The regular ragpickers and junkmen of the city also do a thriving side trade in keeping a sharp lookout for stray valuables. The housewife, dazzled with a glittering array of new tin pans, very often trades off a vest or a coat of her faithful spouse, in which he has left a diamond stud, or a roll of bills, or the like. Old pieces of furniture with secret compartments all out of date and old stoves are often made the receptacles of treasures—instance the one in which a man recently built a fire, never dreaming that his wife had placed therein savings amounting to several hundred dollars, her thick-headedness being of a piece with the man who rolled four hundred dollars in a newspaper, enveloped it, put on a two-cent stamp, and directed it to his family in Germany. The pack-broke open in the mailing room before it left the city. In the large warehouses, where rags are assortied by girls, very rich finds sometimes occur. A valuable diamond ring is an occasional windfall, and money and minor articles of jewelry very often reward a search through rejected garments. A dead baby was once unearthed from a package of rags, and important papers sometimes drift into this catch-all of cast-off clothing. Laundrymen who are disposed to be dishonest reap a rich harvest in studs, sleeve-buttons, and the like, and ready-made clothing men occasionally find a roll of money in a suit that some excited customer has tried on, and into the pockets of which he has unwittingly transferred his cash. Another class of finders is the newspaper-grabbers. There were two men in Chicago some time ago who claimed to have made a living by gathering up newspapers left about by guests at hotels, and selling them to laundrymen for wrapping purposes. Not quite so honest are the gold-dust beaters, some of whom, it is alleged, let their hair grow long, grease it thoroughly, and, by running their fingers through it constantly, carry home what

known of which are "Anna Karenina," "War and Peace," "Before Tilsit," "The Invasion," "Borodino," and his latest work, "Kreutzer Sonata," which has called forth so much criticism.

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"FAINT heart never won fair lady," or conquered difficulties, or achieved glory; but insolent assumption is more contemptible than a lack of moral courage. Be determined, fearless, energetic—not impudent. Stick up for your own rights with all your soul and all your strength, but never infringe a hair's-breadth on the rights of others.

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SHOOT THEM LIKE DOGS.

SO SAYS MRS. LESLIE OF THE ANARCHISTS.

And Thereupon the Chicago Socialists Take Her in Hand and Denounce Her Language as Barbarous—The Fair New York Publisher Severely Criticised.

[Chicago dispatch.]

It having been freely advertised that the socialists would discuss Mrs. Frank Leslie, Waverly Hall was crowded on Sunday afternoon. By way of preliminary, few minor resolutions were offered and discussed and several articles were read on socialistic subjects, and there was the usual row over Prof. Richardson and his resolutions.

The subject of the day was introduced by Mrs. S. Woodman, who read an interview with Mrs. Leslie which appeared in a recent interview of a local sheet, in which she is accredited with saying many harsh things about the socialists. Mrs. Woodman offered a long resolution, of which the following is a sample:

Resolved. That the gentle, tender-hearted representative of America's upstartdom who has done Chicago, during the last week, the honor to visit it, and has kindly consented to appear before the Socialists to give his views on the industrial situation and recommend a course of treatment warranted to cure in all cases for discontented workers of all nationalities, is hereby entitled to the thanks of this meeting, for voicing in so unmistakable a manner the secret sentiment of the self-styled elite of our great cities in regard to the working classes, and the grievances of which they complain.

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DEATH IN THE FLAMES.

TERrible LOSS OF LIFE IN A HOTEL FIRE.

Between Twenty-five and Fifty People Burned to Death in the Leland Hotel, at Syracuse, N. Y.—A Scene of Wild Confusion—Guests Crazed with Fright.

[Syracuse dispatch.]

From twenty-five to fifty lives were lost early this morning by the burning of the Leland Hotel here, the largest hotel in Central New York. The building will prove a total loss. An eye witness says that he saw twenty-five people lose their lives in attempting to escape, and a guest who narrowly escaped death says that fully twice that number have perished in the burning building. The fire started a few minutes after 1 o'clock this morning, and almost instantly the large structure was enveloped in flames from cellar to roof. Every effort was made to arouse the sleeping guests, but the smoke in the halls was so dense that it was found impossible to reach the upper floors, and it is believed many persons were suffocated and their bodies burned. A number of people jumped from windows and were killed or injured.

The fire started in the kitchen near the elevator, and shot up the shaft with almost incredible rapidity to the sixth story and burst through the roof. All the fire engines of the city were quickly upon the scene, but the fire continued to gain headway, and it soon became apparent that the building would be destroyed. The firemen worked heroically to save the inmates of the hotel, and a number were dragged unconscious from the first, second, and third stories, above which the rescuers could not ascend on account of the dense smoke which filled the upper stories.

The scene was one of the wildest confusion. People were seen at the windows on every floor, shrieking frantically for help, which could not be given them. Many fell back into the flames, fainting and exhausted, while others hurried themselves from the windows, seeing instant death on the pavement. Many who escaped from the lower stories will die from the effects of their injuries, occasioned by the falling walls.

How many victims perished will not be known until the fire has