

**RAFFLE
FOR A WIFE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649351350

Raffle for a Wife by Thomas L. Nichols

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

THOMAS L. NICHOLS

**RAFFLE
FOR A WIFE**

RAFFLE FOR A WIFE.

BY

THOMAS L. NICHOLS.

NEW YORK:
BURGESS, STRINGER & CO.

1845.

RAFFLE FOR A WIFE.

CHAPTER I.

OF WHICH THE READER SHALL KNOW THE PURPORT.

STANDING near the south-east corner of the Astor House, at dusk, in a November drizzle, looking at the river of mud, through which the fleets of omnibuses were dashing, and waiting for an opportunity to ford the perilous passage so as to make my way to Ann street, I perceived at length a momentary opening. Three stages were coming up abreast, on a full trot—four were coming down Broadway, all in the full excitement of our daily races. The mud, of unknown depth, but soft consistence, was spattering in every direction. In another instant the whole space, now for the moment open, would be filled with wheels and horses. A slip of the foot, a sprain of the ankle, and I should be trodden on and run over. But the man who wishes to cross Broadway must have courage, a firm foot, a careful eye, and above all a rapid step. There is no telling how much the present state of Broadway is doing to exalt the character of our citizens. A man accustomed to crossing Broadway would think nothing of leading a forlorn hope through the trenches to storm a battery. We shall have plenty of good soldiers when we need them—thanks to our worthy corporation!

A good opportunity should not be lost. The space was clear, as I said, but it might not be again for half an hour. I placed my foot firmly upon the curb-stone—I sprang forward. The three up-bound stages were at least twenty feet off—I was clear of the noses of the first

pair of horses coming down—I only felt the breath of the next—I dived under the pole of another omnibus, and was already congratulating myself upon my escape, when a shout reached me—I felt the mud spattering in my face, and with a desperate spring forward, I just cleared the horses of an omnibus coming down Park Row, and found myself almost knocked over by the wheels of another, which was thundering down the same avenue—that is, it would have thundered had not the wheels been muffled by the mud.

It was a narrow escape—and the stages from the intersecting street were more than I had calculated for. But I was over. My life had one peril the less. Had the worthy Mr. Hague cast my horoscope, he would have found that this conjunction of omnibuses corresponded with some ominous conjunction of planets, no doubt.

And now I come to the important matter. Courage, firmness, skill and luck should not be called into action for nothing. When Leander swam the Hellespont he found a hero. Lord Byron swam it, and he wanted a hero, too. I found what was much better—that, without which heroes and heroines would not avail me. I found a publisher.

Yes; as I landed, breathless, upon the walk; as the tones of that city Brass Band, playing that eternal waltz, in Barnum's balcony, struck on my ear, there came a big hand upon my shoulder, and the exclamation:—

"Well, Old Fellow! how are you?—give us a wag of your bones! Why! you are all over mud!"

"Bah! that's nothing. I am glad to keep my bones whole. It looked doubtful for a second or two. Mud will rub off—but what's the news? How is literature?"

"Coming up, now that the election is over. The country is safe, and people will find time to read again. You can't do better than to give us something?"

"How so?"

"Why, all your books have sold first rate. They were out of print six months ago, and you can't get a copy for love or money. You should have let me print a second edition of the last one."

"I had much rather give you another."

"Had you? Well, by Julius Cæsar! it would sell. We can get off ten thousand, easy, you only give it a good title."

"Pray, what's the odds about a title? A good book should be read if it had no title at all."

"Should be! Yes, but it would not. I had rather have a poor book with a good title than the best thing in the world without something to excite the curiosity. Every book sells at first on the credit of its name, or its author's reputation. Give us a good book—but be sure and give it a good title—something that will make people pick it up—something to pique their curiosity. Throw in a little dash of voluptuousness——"

"Oh!"

"Yes, but make it very moral at the latter end. A bad book with a good moral to wind up with, is like a reformed rake; the women say that he makes the best husband."

"What does your wife think of it?"

"She believes it—and wishes that I would reform."

"There it is. If a rake ever would reform, there might be something in the maxim."

"Oh, they do—there is the whole Native American corporation; they go for reform, every one of them; dog my cats if they don't."

"They are opposed to foreign influence?"

"Yes—death on the Pope, and down on the Irish."

"In favor of protection to American industry, are they?"

"Certainly;—Americans can do their own voting and their own fighting—work up their own cotton and chew their own tobacco."

"Very well, sir; very well. Somebody has said, Let me make the songs of a people and I care not who makes their laws. That was said of the days when nearly all a nation's literature was contained in its ballads. A book has more influence than a song, and nineteen-twentieths of the books upon your shelves are written by foreigners. Your Native American Magistrate, fearing foreign influence, turns a German out of employment, and drives a score of Irish apple-women from the walks around the Park, making a pressure in peanuts, and a crisis in candy;

and then publishes twenty thousand copies of an English high tory book, which are sent into every village in the country, to corrupt the principles of our youth, fill them with false notions of aristocratic splendor, and with disgust at their own simple form of government. How many Irish hod-carriers would have as much influence as Allison, or the author of 'Ten Thousand a Year?'

"Considerable of a heap, I guess."

"And then for protection. The importers of foreign calicoes have to pay for them—or promise to pay at least, and just now our credit is none of the best, over the water. But your importer of thought pays neither cost nor duty. You get for a single guinea what costs the English publisher a thousand. Cotton spinners, sugar planters, and the owners of coal mines, can be protected at the expense of the whole people. But the poor devil who writes a book must compete with the stolen goods plundered from England, France and Germany."

"Rather hard, I confess, and not very consistent."

"It is not very easy to manufacture for a market, supplied with a full stock of stolen goods. It was a good joke on Sidney Smith though, for the Philadelphia publishers to pirate his works, after he had been complaining so bitterly of being swindled in their stocks."

"But that is nothing to the purpose. It is as it is—Polk is elected—the country is safe—and if you will only write a story and give it a good title, it will sell. Dog my cats if it wont! So, set about it."

I walked on to my favorite coffee-house, read my favorite evening papers, discussed my favorite beverage; and in the midst of my waking dreams, bethought me of a few adventures, which, by a little bringing together and dove-tailing, might make a passable *novellate*, with the title which I have affixed as appropriate. If it wont do—why, the publishers may christen it themselves.

Reader, kind by courtesy, and I hope charitable in reality, this time, at least, thou hast not skipped the

PREFACE.

A FEELING of awful responsibility comes over the author, when he sits down to write for the public. He speaks to thousands—to millions it may be—and, glorious possibility!—to posterity. This is very grand. He looks for the rostrum from which he is to address the vast multitude which he sees thronging around him. His bosom is filled with an indescribable dread; he feels in every limb a nervous trepidation. He uses long words, and incomprehensible sentences, to convey sublime abstractions; and all for the want of two or three common-sense reflections.

What is this public? Who compose the thousands and the millions? Who will make up posterity? Tom, Dick, Harry,—Susan, Jane, Sally,—Mr. Smith and Mrs. Jones; the grocer on the next corner; the shoe-maker that beat his wife last Wednesday; the gentleman that drives round the ash-cart; Mrs. Bruce, the elegant daughter of a retired tallow-chandler; and Mr. Simpson, the dashing buck, whose venerable father kept a stall for so many years in Fulton market. All these are very respectable people in their way; descendants of Adam and Eve it is thought, through Noah and his family; and such as these, with you and I, make up the public, and will make posterity, if we let nature have its due course.

The pretty cigar girl, over the way, who smiles so pleasantly, when she rises to wait upon a customer, and then sinks so gracefully into her chair, when she has bowed him out, is an interesting item in this mass of public, and is sure, quite sure to read my story. I can almost hear the jingle of her sixpences, destined to purchase it. Her bright eyes will bend over the page—her pretty lips are parting into a smile—her breath, fragrant as the perfume of her unrivalled "Normas," envelopes the volume. The public vanishes—posterity is no longer awful. I see nothing but the rosy-cheeked cigar girl.

It is but a little matter, between us two—a winter's evening conversation, when there is nothing more attractive—the pastime of some summer's day, under a shady tree, stretched upon the grass, or sitting upon the deck of a steam boat, or while effecting the annihilation of time and space in a rail-road car. The school-boy, bending

down his head, in an apparently profound effort to master a conjugation, may have this page opened beneath his grammar. The budding Miss, sent early to bed, as budding Misses should be, may draw it from some snug concealment, and lighting with a stolen loco-foco the treasured bit of candle, may let it shine upon the book, the pretty night-cap, and the dimpled face, which its ruffled border surrounds—a pure and delicate frame for such a lovely picture. Delicious fancy! Thought of extacy! Since we enjoy so little real, do not frown upon our imaginary bliss.

Something, even now, has been accomplished. By a skilful stratagem, a preface, as necessary to a book as a blessing to a feast, and generally as little regarded, has found readers; and the author, with a powerful effort of a brilliant imagination, and the exertion of great presence of mind, has broken through the awful trepidation which might otherwise have hindered the full exertion of his powers, and is now ready, in a new chapter, to begin the story, to which this may be considered, if the virtuous reader have no objections,—

THE INTRODUCTION.
