

SPIRITUAL TRACTS, No. 8.

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NEW BOY.

BY JUDGE EDMONDS.

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THE NEWSBOY.

WEST ROXBURY, *July 29, 1854*

ONE day, while sitting in my room reading some letters to my family, my daughter became influenced quite unexpectedly, and began by saying : " Hurray ! hurray ! I am out of them dirty streets of New York."

I did not keep notes of this interview, and can therefore only state some things generally about it. He said he was a newsboy in New York, and his name was Tim Peters ; that he had died since the last 4th of July, of cholera, and was about twelve years old ; that his father had been run over by a railroad car ; that he was a man of intemperate habits ; that his mother had survived him awhile in feeble health, and he had one brother, named Bill, about ten years old.

He said many things which showed me that he was familiar with the localities near the upper end of Nassau Street, and his shrewdness, his slang terms, and his manner of speaking, were particularly characteristic of the class of boys to which he said he belonged. And he spoke of men and boys, with whom he had been thrown in contact, in a manner so natural as to carry conviction that he was what he said he was.

There was a keen shrewdness of thought, a reckless, devil may-care manner, and a love of fun about him that can be seen in full combination only in them. He sometimes swore, but immediately checked himself, and said that his mother (who was with him) told him he must not talk so. He said he had seen me when I was a judge, and had read my letter of last August. He had sold more *Heralds* with that in it than usual. I asked him if he had noticed what effect it had had on those who read

it. He said, "I have seen a feller sitting on a hydrant, who said 'he liked that feller who opened his jaws, and dared to say what he thought, and not like ——, who was afraid of having pins stuck in him.'"

This is a part only of this interview, but is enough to show the character of it. But in the course of it, he said that he wanted to give me his history, and have me write it down, and publish it in the SACRED CIRCLE, so that the newsboys might see it, for that it would "do 'em good." I told him I would soon give him an opportunity.

We were then called to dinner, but in the afternoon he came again, and gave me his history, which I wrote down as he went along, nearly in the following words:

He began as before, in a joyful, cheerful tone,

Hurray ! hurray !

Say! that light hurts this ere girl's eyes. [The medium was sitting facing the window.]

You know, as I told you before, my name is Tim Peters. Well, my mother was a good, respectable kind of a woman, and worked at sewing when a gal, she says. Dad was a day-laborer—that wasn't his trade—he was a harness-maker. I didn't know that, but mother says so. Golly! why didn't he stick to it?

Dad worked at that ever so long after he hitched horses with mother, and I was his oldest boy. Well, I grow'd up 'longside my brother, and we had a jolly good time when little, mother says. Mother was American, father was English.

Well, father took to drink, like a darned sight of other folks, and went head over heels down hill fast as he knew how. Mother got sick and worn out, and got to feeling bad.

When dad used to come home, she dreaded to speak to him. He would come tumbling into the house, cuffing us here and there, and swearing at mother, and she used to cry.

One day I come in and see her crying, and I says, "Well, marm, what do you feel bad about?" she cried, and said, "Tim, my boy, your father's worse and worse; he has taken every thing

from us, and if he don't take care, he will take me from you. And, Tim, I hain't got a cent in the house to get breakfast with for to-morrow."

"Well," says I, "mother, wipe your peepers; I'll be supporting on you, mother; you ain't got two boys for nothin'; just say how I can go ahead, and I'll be doin' somethin'."

So she ups with her apron and wiped her eyes. That was an awful cold night. Oh, mercy! I'd heard mother say, when she was a gal, if farmers wanted rain, they prayed in meetin' for it; so when I went to bed, I down on my benders and asked for snow, and some how or other snow come. So the next morning I borrowed next-door neighbor's shovel, and went along the streets hunting "snow jobs," as the boys call it. I got one. "Hurrray!" says I, "now you are set up in business, you're in for it, Tim." So I pockets my money, and trudges home. Says I, "Mother, here's your money." Well, I declare, if she didn't make me feel soft as a girl—I warn't no more a boy—'kase she went to crying agin'.

"Well," says I, "mother, I didn't pray for rain last night. You melt me all down, mother; I feel all gone."

Well, she smiled, and says, "Tim, my boy, what'll we do when this is gone?"

"Well," says I, "mother, give me half o' that, and I'll buy some papers, and start in business myself."

[I asked him how much the half was—he said fivepence 'Twas better than nothing; 'twould buy a loaf of bread any how.]

Well! golly! I pitched down Fulton Street, and invested my stock in papers. 'Twas the *Sun*. You can get lots of 'em for that. I got six for fivepence, and they trusted me three more for tuppence. I don't know how they come to trust me—the boy 'round said they never did it to them. Well, I sold all but one and what do you think I did with that? I kept it as a show for next day; for if I could only buy three, four would look more respectable. That's the way folks trade, you know. Well, I took my money home, and that's the way I helped my mother along.

"Tim," I said, "Let me ask you—"

Well, I'm in the witness box—go it.

"How did you get money to buy papers next day?"

Did another job of snow.

[While I was writing this down, the medium whistled, and he immediately said, "Golly! I didn't think I could do that—thought I must do something while waiting for yer."]

Where did I leave off? Oh, got a shillin', and gave it to mother. Stock was up, but I had none on, so I said nothin'.

When I went home each night there was a grin on my face broad as a moon. Mother said, "Tim, I've hopes of you, if you'll only keep out of liquor." So down she went on her marrow-bones—why-on-earth she did it I couldn't see—but she ups with her eyes and says, "God bless Tim!" Somehow I felt weak in the joints, and down I went; 'twas catchin', so says I, "God bless Tim, too." Then I played leap-frog all round the room, I was so happy. Mother laughed, and said, "Tim, my crazy boy;" that made me feel better, but I couldn't understand it.

Bye-by dad come in, and he smelt like a distillery; and oh, if he didn't rip it! but I gave mother the wink not to let him know I was set up in business. When he come in he couldn't stand up, so he down on *his* marrow-bones, and swore a blue streak. I thought I smelt brimstone. What was eternal strange to me was, mother didn't cry a bit; says I, "Tim, that's mighty strange, she'd cry for you, and not a bit for that lubber." But she did worse—she took to coughing, and I knew the jig was up for that time. And so it went day after day. Dad said she was drunk, but he *knew* he lied.

Well, I kept selling papers and increasing my stock. I took the *Herald*, and sold lots of 'em; 'twas a good investment. I ups Broadway one day, Bill at my side, and I seen some M. P.'s on a corner. I warn't afraid of 'em, so I stepped on one of their toes. He gin me a devil of a look—mother says I mustn't say that—says I to Bill, "Let's to our trotters, or we'll be sent to the House of Refuge." I'd heard tell of that, dad used to threaten me with it. Down by the Park I saw some awful fine

dandies prinking along; says I, "Bill, just seen the M. P.'s; now look at the M. T.'s."

So I went it every day; I couldn't feel bad, to save my life—suspect I warn't born in a bad time. Mother said it used to make her heart good to see me come in.

I asked him, "Were you so cheerful, then?"

I warn't nothing else. When I used to swear, it made her feel bad. I told her I took it the natural way.

I asked him, "How so?"

I had heard my forefathers—I'll tell you what I had heard one day in the Park.

A great lubberly feller was making a speech. He said, "The time is coming when the day shall be celebrated —, hem, — that speaks of the noble deeds of our forefathers." I'm not so grand as he; I can't make such a cock-a-doodle-doo. So I run home and said, "Mother, the day is coming when it shall be celebrated that speaks of the noble deeds of our forefathers."

She said, "Tim what on earth will come of you?" So it went along.

One day dad was brought in dead. I needn't enter into particulars, 'twas all in the papers. I cried it, and made it an extra *Herald* for me.

I asked him, "How so?"

It was the celebration of the death of my forefathers.

I went home, after getting a few coppers, and found mother cryin' and blubbering like every thing, for she had loved him once. She said, "Tim, step softly, your father's dead." Says I, "I will, for I'm 'fraid I'll wake him up."

"Oh," says she, "Tim, you'll break my heart, talking so, forget the past; go look at him who once loved you, and called you his child." I went and looked; his face warn't red no more, and there was a sorrowful expression about his mouth—and I caught something running down my cheek afore I knowed it. Well, they held a coroner's inquest, and he was buried.

I asked what made his tears run.

He had a kind o' sorrowful look. I felt, oh, dear! suppose he'd been a good man, like I see in the Park, wouldn't he love

his Tim? and I thought, "Tim, don't you love him?" How could I, when he made mother suffer so. I 'sposed he was in hell and damnation they talked of, and I couldn't but feel sorry. That was the end of *that*.

I watched mother mighty close after father's exit. In spite of herself she breathed freer. I never see the woman so happy. Bill come in with a forlorn old black bonnet he'd begged somewhere; she kissed him, and said, "God has blessed me in my trials." I felt so proud I could have knocked over any body. We had some potatoes that day—Bill got 'em.

I used often to feel soft—I was took that way every once in a while—tears and fun altogether. I used to be ashamed of myself, and then I'd swear a blue streak to hide it. Bill sold radishes for a living. He went into the vegetable line. I was more intellectual.

Mother got sewing. She scratched, we scratched, and we got along nicely; there was nobody to drink it all up.

I was death on the *M. P.'s*, just for deviltry; I *couldn't* keep still.

I used to feel bad, coming home nights, to see mother look so bleached. I saw a "pain-killer" advertised down Nassau Street, so I went and got some for mother. Warn't I a fool—liked to have killed *her*, not the pain.

One day she said to me, "Tim, take this ring, my boy, and go buy yourself a pair of shoes." Well, says I, "No, mother, I can't do it." She says, "Timmy, I'll never live to see you wear 'em out, so let me see you have them." If I'd got a licking, I couldn't have felt worse. So I runs after Bill, and, says I, "Bill, come in here, mother's kinder lonely." Bill never stopped for nothing, but after the doctor he goes—a 'spensary doctor—mother looked so sick. Says I, "Mother, open your peepers; don't look so." She says, "Tim, God bless you, Tim and Bill. I hate to leave you, but God will take care of the orphans." I says, "Mother, I'm sorry you are going, but seeing you can't stay, hurry up your cakes, and I'll take care of myself."

I asked him, "Why did you say that?"

Oh, she did feel awful bad; so says I, "Mother, Jordan is

a hard road to travel. If you get there before I do, tell 'em I'm coming, too." She laughed, and, by golly ! if she didn't die a laughing, and that was just what I wanted.

Bill didn't get back before she died. Oh ! didn't he take on ? Poor cretur ! He took on awful bad, seeing mother 'd gone before he got there. " Well," says I, " Bill, if I only knew how to wear petticoats, I'd be a mother to you ; but," says I, " never mind, we'll set up bachelor's hall."

I thought I was going to stay at that place, but no ; rent day come, and we had to go ; and when I gets outside I said to Bill, " Nothing like taking the air." So we slept 'round in the carts that night.

A poor old Irish woman washed for mother when she died. She did it for nothing. Catch rich folks doing that. She said that she knowed how she'd feel if she should leave her boys kicking about, and if I wouldn't be up to so many tricks, she'd keep us. So we staid with her after that. She was a darned good old thing, but not so clean as mother. I told her I would do some odd jobs for her. Her rooms were dark, and I white-washed them, and whitewashing it was ! She was awful tickled ; but I didn't like my boarding-place, 'cause she wouldn't take any pay.

Says I to Bill, " I'll get you a situation." So, as luck would have it, I used to listen to the people's talking, and one day I heard a man say he wished he had a smart boy to take into the country. I goes up to him and says, " I knows a fellow." He looks at me, and says, " What do you mean ? " I says, " I knows a fellow will suit your capacity." Says he, " Are you the chap ? " Says I, " No, I aint, but I knows one what is." " Well," says he, " I like the looks of you." Says I, " I'm obliged to you." So I whistled to Bill, and he come. He was really a pretty-eyed fellow, just like mother. So the man axed me about my relations, and I told him all about it. " Well," says he, " I like the looks of your boy there, and I'll take him." " But," says I, " Look here, mister, don't you lick him ; if you do, I'll lick you back." I thought he'd die a laughing.

So I fitted Bill out. How do you think I did it ? I give

him some gingerbread. 'Twas as hard to part us as two peas in a pod. But the old feller fixed him all up before he went out of town. Bill felt so grand and happy, that he forgot to be sorry at leaving me.

[I asked him here if he could tell me the name of that old Irishwoman, and where she lived. He said it was Bridget Mahan; she lived near the Five Points; he couldn't mention the name of the street; said it was a short one, and added, "Hold on! see if I can fetch it!" He paused a moment, and not recalling the name, went on:]

I trudged home to the old woman's where I boarded. I felt awful streaked; I couldn't cry nor do nothing, so I went to the National Theater. I saw nothing for my tears—had to laugh once in a while. 'Twasn't the National Theater—it was the next one to it, where the boys could get in for sixpence. I sold papers ever so long after that. I got in all sorts of mischief; took to smoking and chewing—the boys set me up for it. Then I got happy again, but I felt lonesome; I went to all the fires—used to go to Hoboken; pitched pennies, till I got enough to pay the ferriage. The boys used to say I cheated. I wonder if I did! They said I was a gambler, but I only used *common cents*. I had a black eye every once in a while, fighting the boys who twitted me about Bill and mother. I wouldn't stand that, so I give 'em something to remember me by. They are hard boys—had to be so. I used to pitch into the bullies when pushing the little ones away, and hooking their papers.

I made about a shilling a day, depending on the news and the brain of the editor. I tell you one thing, if any one of the boys didn't sell his papers, we'd go shucks with him, and each take one—that was among the good fellers. Tell you what I used to do—go 'long up Broadway, and see one of your fine-looking fellows, run agin' him, most knock his breath out, then ask, "Have a paper, sir?"

I always thought of mother while bawling my paper at the top of my lungs. Sunday was a forlorn day.

One day I thought I'd treat myself, so I bought one of them penny ice creams that they sell at the corners. I was took up

with the cramp, and went home. I had changed my boarding-place, and the way I paid my board was—if I made a shilling I paid two cents for my board ; if I made eighteen pence, then I paid four cents. I was awful sick. "Tim," says I, "you're goin' home—ain't you glad?"

I grew worse and worse, and all grew dark about me. I wished for Bill. I lay on some straw on the floor. I began to feel so pleasant and happy. I heard mother speaking to me, "Tim, my boy!" I jumped right up in bed, but I saw nothing—then the pain come on. One of the boys come in, and says he, "Tim, what you doin' there?" "Ike," says I, "I'm goin' where the good niggers go, I 'spect."

"Tim," says he, "I guess you'll be well to-morrow."

"Ike," says I, "if I'm well, I won't be here. Mother's calling me, and I can't stay." What did he do but cry. I never see folks cry so easy. Says I, "Ike, don't let the bullies beat that new-comer—the green 'un—will yer?"

Says he, "No, I'll take care o' him till you come back."

Then it grew darker ; I didn't hear his voice. All at once I saw mother. I had no pain, and there was no tears in her eyes. Says I, "Hurray ! I'm in for it. Ain't I, mother ? How the dickens did I come here?"

Says she, "Look !"

I looked and saw them carrying my coffin out of the room. Then she took me with her, and if I ain't as happy as a bee, I tell *you*. I go 'bout singing, but not the papers. There are lots of other boys, but somehow I feel a kind of babyish ; I don't want to be out of *her* sight. I thought I was independent.

I've been back to the *Herald* office ; there I heard some one say, "Timothy." "Oh, grand," says I.

"Hush!" says mother, "don't talk so."

Then the other one said, "You must go back my child, and teach the little newsboys, and if they keep a kind feeling in their hearts and try to be good, there is a happy place for them all."

"Well," says I, "mister, whoever you are, it's easier said than done ; because, if a boy tries to be good, there is always some-

body to kick it out of him." "But," says I, "mister, I'll do that same;" so here I am at it.

Would you like to know how I learned to read? Mother taught me some, then I taught myself some. All the newsboys can't read, but when they have got through selling their papers, some one of 'em who can read sits right down with a lot 'round him, and reads to 'em; so they know a darned sight more of what's goin' on than you think they do. Then they talk it over among 'emselfes.

Look here, mister, I tell you what had a wonderful effect—when a newsboy come up to a gentleman, and he looked pleasant on him and smiled; 'twas worth three cents to sell a paper to that feller. But when they are cross and push 'em aside, it makes a feller swear. Whoever it is, tell 'em to be good to their mothers, and they'll be as happy as *I am*. Hurray!

Here ended this interview. The next day he came again, and talked considerably. Among other things, he said that once he got drunk just to see how it was. "Golly," says he, "I got enough of it—never catch me at it agin." I asked him if he could give me the names of any of his companions. He gave me the names of four of them: Jim, Ike, John Smith, and Lazy Bob.

He brought with him at this interview the Spirit of a boy younger than himself, who said his name was Dick Hardin.

J. W. E.