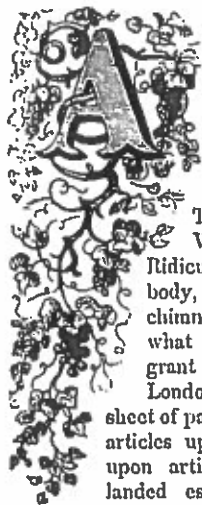


THE NEWSBOYS OF NEW YORK.



RACE by themselves, and what a race they run! But, before we begin our sketches, let us have a short chat about their stock in trade.

What is their business? To sell newspapers. What is a newspaper?

Ridiculous question, as if everybody, from an editor down to a chimney-sweep, did not know what a newspaper was. We grant that you know that the London Times is a double

sheet of paper, printed all over with articles upon politics, and politics upon articles, advertisements of landed estate, poodle dogs, lost overcoats and wives, with news from India and China, and the most correct and reliable information relative to the United States and their trimmings. (See Arrowsmith *en passant*.)

Yes, we take your word that you know all about the London Times and the New York Times, and the London Morning Herald and the New York Herald, and all the papers from the Pillars of Hercules to the Post of our metropolitan burgh; but do you know anything about the history of newspapers, their rise, and progress? Let us be learned and somewhat pedantic on this head, and so forthwith and succinct that your eldest boy, before he goes to college, may be a little beforehand in the matter, you, his parent, being, of course, thoroughly booked up on the subject. Then tell him that there are few newspapers now where newspapers were first started. That is singular, but it is true. Italy, the patroness of art, is the mother of newspapers. It was the republican-aristocratic Venice that first started the idea, and it assumed the monthly form, but it was a governmental machine at best. Their paper was called "Gazetta," meaning a gossip or tattler; hence, probably, the celebrated "Tattler" of Sir Richard Steele. So jealous, however, was the Venetian Government, that they only allowed the paper to appear in manuscript—a rather tough job that would be now-a-days, and probably, if insisted upon, would drive many an editor from his chair. In the primitive days of newspapers, their editors were called *menanti*, because

their effusions were intended to disseminate "defamatory reflections;" and they were, in consequence, gored down by a bull of Gregory XIII. A Gregory would be useful now-a-days in some cases.

In England, the first newspaper, according to Chalmers, was published in the reign of Elizabeth. During the time of the Spanish Armada, papers increased rapidly, and were used to influence the loyalty of England against the threatened invasion. In the time of Cromwell, the use of periodical papers became more general. At the Restoration, the proceedings of Parliament were published by authority, and the first paper after the revolution was called "The Orange Intelligencer."

There was but one daily paper in the reign of Queen Anne; the rest were weekly. It was then that Sir Richard Steele published the "Tattler," in which he introduced political topics; but Addison adopted the plan of ignoring political discussions, and to his good taste we are indebted for some of the finest periodical writing of that illustrious age. His papers, however, would hardly be popular at this period, and especially in our country, though, within a few weeks past, a writer much after the style of Addison has assumed the pen for a noble purpose of patriotism, and whether it be that his style is of the right sort, or that his subject is one dear to our people, the fact is patent that the paper for which he writes has added immensely to its circulation by the means of his literary services.

Having thus, in brief, told about the matter, let us look at its "Page."

To write the biography of a living great man is a hard task, though his ripened years are broad spread before the world, and to write the lives of boys most assuredly is a more difficult job, for they have generally acquired neither physical or moral force, nor have circumstances or the common necessities of the world needed their assistance in rendering service to a great cause. Boys are to be boys—school, truant, idle, ragged, and good boys. All boys passed through the same trials, and the life of one was the life of all of his class. There was nothing startling in their career, from taffy sucking up to the last thrashing from the common excoriation of youth, ycleped the schoolmaster. Now-a-days, though a fond parent may have a dozen children, with only one daughter among them, yet he has no boy in his family. The year

males are "young gentlemen," "youths," "young men," "fellows," "young Jones," or "young Smith," and the *pater familias* feels that his minors are in the majority. These young gentlemen smoke, drink, dine at Delmonico's, call for champagne cock-tails at the St. Nicholas, and, if you listen to their conversation while they sip their liquor, you will expect to hear one of the young Shanghaes say to his comrade, "By-the-bye, old fellow, how is your boy Harry getting on, at collegio?" You may hear worse.

The newsboys are a part of the forcing system, but are a distinct class, another nature, a new revolution. Some of them never had parents, never were born, will never die, and in their earliest infancy, instead of lisping "papa," lisp "papor." Full of energy, full of devilment, full of fun, and full of fight—when fighting is necessary—they are a distinct and separate type, and seem to be free of all those restraints that govern the rest of humanity. They are winged buzzards who gather around a new enterprise, ready to pounce upon it and try whether it will help them to their daily prey. They are, also, the thermometer of literary weather, the ragged clouds of an electric atmosphere, foretelling the hurricane of a popular issue; they are the Mother Carey's chickens that follow in the wake of the steamships; they are, in fine, the Fucks of news, the Ariels of "sensation," the heralds of peace, the avant couriers of war, and they cry the latest murder as if they had in their own persons suffered the catastrophe. Burdell was a god-send to them, and they would willingly club together to pay for the reënaction of such another tragedy. They told us that the cable was laid, and by their lips spoke the Queen to President Buchanan. To them Thackeray is a familiar, Bulwer an intimate, and Dickens a chum. Their hands carry the mental pabulum of a city; they sing aloud, "rival uv the Niagara," and forthwith we have news from Europe; and ere long we will have another cry among us: "*Overland mail from California just 'rived at Twenty-second street!*"

In writing about them it is hard work to know where to begin. Shall it be with a description of their dress, or a gamut of their cries; shall it be in the morning or at night, at noon or evening, at dinner or when they starve, poor fellows? Let it be in the morning; and so it shall be, to please you.

Here is one of them arranging his goods upon his counter, in

other words, spreading his papers on the pavement, near the curb-stone. Busy little boy-merchant it is, so intent upon the proper displaying of his merchandize. He has got the salient points out of the leading morning papers, and as the early plodder to business passes by, he hears the urchin on the sidewalk say "murder." It is the deed of blood, done late in the night, and reported in full by the indefatigable itemizers for the morning sheet. This dealer in murder and European news is, perhaps, the one spoken of in the Daily Times, some weeks ago. In another portion of this article we will have occasion to speak of the newsboys' night habits, in reference to the newsboys' Lodging House; but at present we insert the graphic description of little Tommy:

"One very original figure among the newsboys seemed a general attraction. His features were no exception to the general indication of shrewdness in the countenances of his companions, but his attire and appearance had such a character of drollery that you could not have looked at him without smiling. His old tattered white coat, which hung nearly to his heels, was fastened by a wooden skower at his neck, which had neither shirt nor handkerchief. Tommy says he will soon be a citizen of the free and independent Republic without naturalization, as he was born in Cherry-street, in this city. He has been four or five years an orphan, and since that time he has endeavored to make an honest living by working at stripping tobacco, blackening boots, and newspaper selling. He worked on a farm and a canal. 'At present,' said one of the newsboys, 'he deals in the lumber business, that is, he sells matches, and finds it more profitable.'"

We hope that Master Tommy will continue to find the lumbering business both profitable and instructive. Matches are made in heaven, though Lucifer has dipped into the business



ARRANGING HIS PAPERS.

in more cases than one, and Hymen's torch too frequently is kindled with a Lucifer match, and wound up with a strong smell of brimstone. (Vide the Bennett divorce case at Hartford, and some others, too tedious, alas, to mention.)

It is true, as in the case of Tommy, that sometimes the professors of paper-selling quit that business, and take to the scientific pursuit of cleaning boots. But the newsboys, as a general thing, have but a poor opinion of the Park lads, who cry aloud to passers-by, "Black your boots, Mister?" We questioned one of the boys the other day upon the subject of the "Lodging House for newsboys," and he said, with the contemptuous air of a Chinese mandarin,

"We don't sleep there now; only the boot-black boys do."

Where do they sleep? We will come to that after a while.

The writer of this article, when, upon one occasion, he was about stepping into the Fourth Avenue Harlem Rail Train, was pestered somewhat by a boy, who not only sold the evening paper, but was also the proprietor of a small library of new novels—all of which he carried under his arm.

"Buy this, Mister," showing us, at the same time, a volume of Thackeray's "Newcombs." "No," I said, trying to get rid of him; "I wrote that book myself." The boy never changed the expression of his face as I announced myself to him as the renowned novelist, but drew from his bundle another work, written by Dickens. Again we told him that we had written that also, and so on with several other works. In fact, we thought it was very smart to show off in this style, and flattered ourself that it was a new mode of getting rid of the persistent bookseller; but we were doomed to sudden and irreparable discomfiture, for the ragged urchin looked at us with the same unmoved face, perhaps dashed about the eyes with a gleam of conscious superiority, and said, in a quiet, innocent, inoffensive sort of way, "Did you write the history of the next year, Mister?" We bought a book of that boy, and hope to read one of his own, some of these days; for the boy was bright enough to be an author—if that requires any peculiar brightness, after all.

Poor little fellows, what a world of patience do they not acquire! and what a great capital it is to them in their trade, at times! You have read your paper while you drank your coffee, and you pass by the curb-stone bookstore primed with all the news, and regardless of the appeal he offers—either by his patient silence or his suggestive words. There he

sits, with a few pennies in his hand, and, to all appearance, happy with the monotonous pitch copper game he plays in the intervals of his selling. He sits, barefooted and ragged, at the corner, on the cold curb, and by him go the omnibuses, crowded with the rich merchants and well-to-do shop-people. He has seen these omnibuses pass by him every morning with the same people in them, and he may think of their buckwheat-cake breakfasts, and the rich Moelia that smoked its incense from the silver urn; but he does not envy them the luxury for well the cunning urchin knows that long labor and close work, close and steady and hard, with bitter doubts and harrowing fears, are what the rich man must go through ere he wins his smoking cakes and his silver urn, and he is happy in his rags and his half-caked certainty. So he sits by the curb, and tosses his pennies in the air, but they are more costly than some of the bubbles blown by the stock-brokers from their pipes, in the street of Mammon, lower down the city, in the shadow of Trinity.



NEWSBOYS IN THE STREET.

The boys eat and drink as well as other people, though, to tell the truth, their ordinary food does not consist of canvas back and Heidsick.

There is no class of humanity, however, that would enjoy such things with greater relish; and to skeptics in that matter, we would recommend the experiment of inviting a few of these interesting gentry to the gilded saloon, there to partake of such a

past as idle wealth and surfeited indigestion treat themselves to every day in mere wantonness of enmi. It would be a grand sight to see these fellows dining on Bryant's "Water-fowl," and cutting right and left into a boned turkey. For the sake of good morals, we might suggest the omission of the bottle. Beer is what they swear by.

Directly opposite the Herald office there is a spacious eating-house, where most of these lads congregato. It is called the "Cake and Coffee Saloon." Go in there about cloven o'clock, when the newsboys' matin work is done; and the sight will well repay for whatever trouble it may cost you to descend into their favorite resort.



NEWSBOYS DINING.

The same voices that rang along the streets with "Extras," resound here in lower keys; and the self-possessed clut of ten years of age calls, with potential authority, for his "plate with six on," and a cup of strong coffee. It is the Club House of our youthful friends, and though they may not be as elegant in manner as persons of greater pretensions, they generally behave with decorum, and are waited upon with a species of humorous civility by the assistants of the place.

There is, after all, a pathos in their lives, that cannot fail to strike the philosophic observer, and efforts have been made by philanthropic individuals to cheer their vagrant and homeless existence; but they are the ragged Arabs of civilization, reckless, hap-hazardish, caring only for the hour and its pennies, and, like all boys of their age, free from the prophetic thoughts of the dim future. One thing is to be said of them, they never figure in our criminal courts, and they are free to vend the public news of police reports, for their "withers are unprung;" and no one can stop and say to the ragged merchant of printed rags, "Your name, my lad, has a bad mark against it in this sheet."

When Russia withstood, with the heroism of the old Trojan, the leagured bands of France and England and the sick Turk, who will forget how the cry, "News from Sebastopol!" rang through the city? Every ear listened, after office hours, for the announcement of the battle "Extras;" and when the Redan fell and the Malakoff was stormed and taken by the swarthy Zuave, what a jubilee of joy broke through the newsboys' ranks; and quick as the mighty engine would print the slips, the crowd of Mercurys rushed from the offices of the daily journals, and huzza'd for three pence the brave report of victory.

Again, when, a few years back, the hearts of thousands anguished at the long absence of the favorite mail steamer Atlantic, well do we recollect the awful state of anxiety that pervaded all classes of the community, and the eagerness with which every sign was hailed or news read that encouraged hope.

On board the missing ship was one dear to many; and the writer of these skeleton sketches shared the anxiety, in a degree, of those near and dear to him. Time rolled on, and hope almost shrank from the bosom of his kindred and his friends, and the mystery of

fate hung, like a shroud, upon the long-delaying vessel and her hapless crew.

Winter was upon us; and one night, when sleep had fallen upon the great city, a cry arose, high and clear—so clear and high, that at first it seemed as if it came from the great vault itself; and we, as did thousands, sprang from our bed, and hurried to the door. Silence again for a moment, but yet we could not be mistaken—that voice, that piercing call, those words! Some one has stopped the utterer to talk to him. Who has a right to stop him for private gossip when a whole street listens with burning impatience for a confirmation of the news? Again that cry, that glorious cry—The ship is safe—the Atlantic safe—crew and passengers safe! She will come to port at last. God bless the newsboy for the thrill of ecstasy he sent to many an aching, watching heart that night, for he was, in truth, if there ever was one, a messenger of joy.

But he must have made a little fortune that night along our streets, for every door-way opened, and no one stood upon the taking of the change.

What a record they might keep of great events, and what a study is before them of physiognomy! But much fear we they seldom rise above the recompense of pennies. Who of their betters do?

It's a great sight to our country cousins to see these chaps coursing up Broadway of an evening, when their Extras contain some news of import. Such a chase, such a strife to get first to the great hotels up town! Crinoline cannot stop them, and high-decked dames scornfully twirl their zones, trying to escape the contact of the newspaperial ambassadors. By rickety old gentlemen and exquisite foppery of both sexes, they dash like Camanches



THE NEWSBOY WITH HIS EXTRAS.

after a flying foe, screaming and yelling. When they are stopped by some one curious in these matters, when, out of breath, they fold the paper and fumble for change; and then, with a quickened step, they fly onward, their ragged garments fluttering like shot-torn flags.

To sell and buy news are affairs of great excitement to boys and men.

From the ranks of the newsboys of New York have sprung men that now are crowding with lives of distinguished honor the list they commenced in straightened upright lines, and our legislative halls have been adorned by more than one of this class.

Ragged as they seem to be, their regard for their economy, and prove that their little hearts remember their poor sick mothers and weaker brothers and sisters; for them they strive in the depth of winter, when the snow may be too deep for lazy long legs in heavy boots, but not too deep for these faithful laborers for sparsely provided homes. While other boys are muffled in their "russet frock-coats," and well provided against the rigors of winter, by careful maternity, our boys are hurrying to their street corners, to brush away the deep snows from their old shoes, commencing their hard lives in bitterness of doubt, and tatters.

Many have been the inquiries we have made with regard to these boys and their habits; and happy are we to have it in our power to say, conscientiously, that, as a class, and as individuals, they will compare favorably with boys of their age, better educated and placed nearer to those advantages that are generally conceived to be the means of improving the state of human morality.

Left to themselves, to act, and struggle, and gain their living, their out-door life would lead them naturally into scenes of powerful temptations, and it could not be wondered at if these uncared-for children of society should yield themselves to the vulgar dissipation to which they are exposed. But they do resist—they act as parents to their families, providing them with the hard-earned necessities that serve to keep the wolf of want from the door, and nothing more.

When you see a newsboy, with his wild locks, and tattered garb, and bundle of newspapers, let us pray you to turn one moment, and help him for his mother, sick or poor, or both, in the humble tenement in the back of the old street, and Heaven's Lord will not turn his eyes from the simple act of charity and justice, though at the moment an emperor and a queen, amid the salvos of artillery and the huzzas of thousands, may claim his notice.

The theaters are the great resort of these

anda. Their day's labors are done, and, with pea-nuts in their pockets, you can see them sitting in the pit, especially of the Bowery, scrutinizing with critical acumen the acting of a Forrest.

This little eager fellow, whose portrait we do ourselves the pleasure of presenting to you, is quite as character; he is a great judge of acting, and you will see that he has a good memory.

A famous actor tells us that he had played for many nights in a favorite piece. His was the principal character. During the continuance of the play upon the boards, he observed that one boy in the pit watched him constantly with open mouth and unwinking eyes—so much so, that the boy became to him his audience, and for him alone he acted.

It so happened that one night the players and their friends were going to have a grand supper, and in consequence, he skipped several passages in his part, in order not to make the hour of the festival too late. Whenever he omitted the text, he saw the boy give a start and look puzzled, and at last, when he had ignored more than a dozen passages, he was surprised by seeing the little fellow, seemingly unconscious of the presence of others, in his intense attention, rise in his place, and hear him call out, "No, you don't, old fellow; you're skipping agin!"

The boy had got the piece to memory, and was jealous of the integrity of the part. The actor was afraid to skip any more, and the supper had to wait awhile, owing to the newsboy critic in the pit.

There are about five hundred newsboys in the city of New York, and they range from the age of eight to that of twenty. Of the latter class some are married, and all, as we have said before, are of orderly habits, and free from those taints that characterize a large portion of our city youth.

Their profits, from daily and weekly papers, vary from one dollar to three a day; but it is from the weeklies that the larger portion of their revenues are derived. The Evening Express, with its three editions, and the Evening Post, contribute largely to their support, but the Ledger, and papers of that class, are their grand provinces of profit.

They rise with the dawn, and wait for their papers in the various offices, whose proprietors are ever kind and considerate to their



NEWSBOYS AT THE THEATRE.

wants, in winter providing them with a room and fire.

Speculative, or philanthropic enterprise, has undertaken to provide these little fellows with a comfortable night's lodgment, where they can sleep, protected from the weather, in comfortable beds and in a well-aired room. For a time the novelty of the thing took their fancy, and it became quite a fashionable resort; but the Bedouin will ever be a Bedouin, and the newsboy is an Arab still. He loves the street, as do his betters on "change." He loves the air, and grumbles not at the rain; he sports like a Spartan in the snow, and like an Esquimaux, defies the cold. No confined Utica of a lodging house can pent his liberty, and when the night comes down upon our city; when policemen, in stand-up collars, take their stand-up drinks in the snug saloon; when carriages whirl from scenes of public amusement or private enjoyment; when the moon is bright or hid; when the wind whistles, and the town clock strikes the hour of twelve, all fast and sound, the newsboy sleeps. Poor little man! he has crept into a box, fortunately left upon the pavement by a dry goods porter, and there, snug and warm, he has his rest rent free. His comrade muses in the lamp light, and ponders in his wakeful brain what great catastrophe will happen, by which the extras will be set in motion on the morrow.

Soon he, too, will creep into the doorless house, and nestle by the side of his partner,

and then, let the storm come and the rain fall, they are safe, where the torrent will not penetrate or burglars break in. But it is not always that these chaps occupy such impromptu lodgings; for, we have said, many of them have cozy homes, where they seek shelter. Those who take up their lodgings in dry goods boxes, and lay around loose, are the earliest at



THE NEWSBOYS AT NIGHT.

the distribution office in the morning, and the first at the corners, and consequently they gather the "early worms."

By night or day, at all hours and in all seasons, we like to meet them. Industry and surprise have "marked them as their own," and sometimes, and, indeed, frequently, they have wit that cuts, as we have shown before.

Our own personal home is not within the city proper, and our suburb has its newsboys, and, as regularly as the morning comes to our door little Billy, with his papers. Through the great snow that fell in winter he made his way, and faithful to his duty, handed us our money's worth of news. When the air is balmy about our river-banked dwelling, and the sunlight falls among the branches of the garden trees, Billy looks about him, and says, "fine morning, sir." Ever pleasant, honest, ever gentle, ever unshaken, is our welcome messenger, and he has become a link between us and the outer world, seeming a part of the papers he has borne to us so long. To him and to all of his faithful brethren peace.

SNOW IN THE WOODS.

THE snow lies asleep in the woods,
Asleep at the feet of the trees;
The myrtle is tender, and broods
Over the white sleeper it sees;
The larches are watching, and pale.
Like mother with babe on her knees:
Drop the young laurels, burdened and frail,
Slow tear drops, that gather and freeze.

The pine tree is stern, but it stoops,
And holds up a finger, to hush
The tassel that swings as it droops.
The holly tree scarcely may blush—
Green holly must smother its flush.

Red berries may bleed, but not drop
On the upturned face of the snow—
The hare would not print with his foot
The breast of the death-like snow:
If he comes he will wonder, and stop,
And creep to the first naked root,
And gaze himself blind at the snow.

Sound would freeze like the rill,
Before it would startle the place;
The air would stiffen and chill
Before it would breathe on that face:
Tassels are stark as the cones;
Pools are as dumb as the stones.

Birds only muse in their hearts
Old hymns of their mystical creed,
Plumes roughen, and not a bill parts
Though the cedar should squander its seed.
The hoary yew bows, as in prayer;
The mistletoe tells its white beads:
The gaunt fox may kneel in his lair,
The ivy must pause as it leads
The icicles, heavy to bear;
Thrill the stricken and sensitive reeds
Not a strand of their frozen hair.

Such is the mystic's fear
The ghostly, mysterious snow,
On exhausted and passion-spent air,
Its awe and its silence can throw.